

Clio's Scroll



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Clio’s Scroll, the Berkeley Undergraduate History Journal, is published twice yearly by students of the Department of History at the University of California, Berkeley. The journal aims to provide undergraduates with the opportunity to publish historical works and to train staff members in the editorial process of an academic journal. *Clio’s Scroll* is produced by financial support from the Townsend Center for the Humanities, the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC), and the Department of History. *Clio’s Scroll* is not an official publication of the ASUC or UC Berkeley. The views expressed herein are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of the journal, the editors, the university, or sponsors.

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EDITORS

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KATHERINE BOOSKA is a sophomore majoring in History and Political Economy. She is interested in religious history, intellectual history, and intersections between law and religion in the United States. Katherine also holds a strong interest in Slavic history and politics. Outside of her studies, Katherine is a caseworker at the Student Advocate's Office and writes for the Berkeley Political Review. For comedic relief, she improvises with Best Laid Plans Improv and Improv 4 Charity, and writes sketches for Bootleg Sketch Comedy. She loves long coastal hikes, independent bookstores, and knitting for her friends.

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KARAH GIESECKE is a third year history and anthropology student at UC Berkeley who grew up between the Midwest, Greece and California. She is especially interested in subaltern histories, herstory and in the history of popular and material culture. In the past she has researched questions like "Can Fashion Emancipate?" and is currently beginning her senior thesis on menstrual capitalism and how menstrual products became commodified. When she's not in class or working on readings, she can be found swing dancing, running, practicing yoga, petting neighborhood cats and trying out new vegan recipes.

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PARKER J. BOVÉE is a junior from Sacramento, California majoring in History. Coming from a family with two other History majors, he has always been deeply interested in understanding the past. Parker hopes to focus his undergraduate work and beyond on the American West in exploring differing notions of American identity along ethnic and economic lines. Aside from worrying too much about exams, he is regularly disappointed by his hometown Sacramento Kings, overjoyed by Liverpool FC, and captivated by a wide array of music.

SAFFRON SENER is a fourth-year student at UC Berkeley majoring in History and minoring in Art History. She focuses her studies on Early American Colonial history and U.S. history preceding the Civil War, and her favorite subject is the Salem Witch Trials. Outside of class, she makes zines, roller skates, bakes, and tries not to drown in readings!

TARA MADHAV is a senior majoring in History and Political Science. She's currently writing her thesis on, broadly, the history of American school desegregation in the mid to late 20th century. In her spare time, she enjoys long conversations, reading fiction, and thinking about places she'd like to visit.

VINCENT LIU is a sophomore from Los Angeles pursuing a majoring in history. His focus is mainly on 20th century America, specifically its foreign policy and changing relationships with other countries. In his spare time, Vincent enjoys watching basketball, playing video games, and walking his dog.

REVA KALE is a sophomore studying History and is considering a minor in Public Policy. She has not chosen a field of concentration but is interested in South Asian history as well as 20th-century American history. Outside of school, she enjoys illustration and graphic design, binge-watching Game of Thrones, and exploring all the good places to eat in the Bay! In the future, she hopes to attend law school or graduate school.

Note from the Editors

Dear Readers,

Welcome to the Spring 2021 edition of Clio's Scroll. This semester we are fortunate to publish three distinct papers that center around the topic of diversity, minority and distinction. Katherine Booska's book review explains how Donald Trump connected with evangelicals to win an election beyond most people's imagination; Julius Miller explores homosexuality in German military where masculinity intertwined with the "brotherly love"; Anthony Bell dives into the era of Harlem Renaissance and shows how the White and Black worked against and with each other, while sometimes fighting within themselves.

As the world is recovering from COVID-19, there seems to be a hope that our lives will soon go back to where they used to be: studying in the libraries, having foods in our favorite restaurants, playing sports with friends. Coming out of such challenging times, a sense of normalcy is what we are all hoping for. Yet as lovers of history, we have learnt frequently that those who forget the history shall repeat their fall. As tempting as it is to erase the memory of 2020 altogether, we must not ignore the fact that the coronavirus has changed everyone's life in an irreversible way. It is the outbreak of the virus that made the world aware of how weak we are as individuals, how unprepared we are against a global public health crisis, and how far we are away from racial equality when Asians became the target of violence. However, it is also the process of fighting the virus that made us realize how strong we are when nations work together to create vaccines across the world, how kind people are when many mobilize to save small business and keep staying at home for the safety of everyone, how brave we are when medical workers chose to stand in the first line of defense against the spreading virus, and how resilient we are when millions lost their loved ones but did not give up, and helped out others in need through volunteer work and donation. Those are the stories of humanity, and we are obligated to remember them: to avoid more heartbreak, and to advance our strength and unity.

Let us look bright into the future, with a heart of remembering.

The Editorial Board of Clio's Scroll would like to thank the Townsend Center for the Humanities and the Associated Students at the University of California (ASUC) for the generous funding that made this publication and editorial process possible. As always, the editors are indebted to Berkeley's Department of History for its endless support, guidance, and encouragement. Of course, none of this would have been possible without the hard work and dedication of our contributors, as well as the support and love from our readers, you. Please, enjoy:)

Sincerely,
The Editors

Contributors

ANTONEY BELL is a senior currently finishing his last year of study at McGill University, where he is pursuing an honours bachelor's degree in History with a minor in French Literature. His interests include the history of race relations in twentieth century United States as well as transatlantic slavery. He would like to thank Professor Wendell Nii Laryea Adjetey for his guidance and support in the completion of his paper and for his inspiring lecture on American history. He would also like to thank Dominic and Katja for their support throughout the writing process.

JULIUS MILLER recently graduated from University of California Berkeley with a Bachelor of Arts in History and History of Art. His research mainly involves postwar Germany history as well as postwar art but he has dabbled in American cultural history as well as many periods of art from the Hellenistic Era to Rococo. Julius will be moving to New York in the fall and will hopefully be carrying on his studies in the big apple. Other than being enveloped in school for as long as he can remember, he loves losing himself at various exhibitions, diving a little too deep into sports stats, and taking care of his bunny, Pickle; he can also get lost in any antique store, flea market, or swap meet. You will probably find him there. He hopes to keep on writing past his collegiate experience and translating his knowledge from university into the "real world."

KATHERINE BOOSKA is a second-year History student at the University of California, Berkeley. Her interests include religious history, intellectual history, and the histories of morality and progress in civil society. Katherine hopes to direct her academic work towards a better understanding of how intellectuals and religious groups have interacted to shape American institutions and ideals. She spends her time practicing her Russian, taking long hikes, and exploring the Bay Area's selection of independent bookshops.

Men, Blessed Men

A Review of Kristin Kobes Du Mez’s Jesus and John Wayne

Katherine Booska

Why did evangelicals support Donald J. Trump in the 2016 election? How has militant masculinity pervaded American evangelicalism, and when did this ethos take hold? Kristin Kobes Du Mez, a historian at Calvin University, has sought to answer these questions with *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted A Faith and Fractured a Nation*, which provides a new starting point from which to question gender and evangelicalism in the United States. Steeped in a thorough analysis of evangelical consumer culture and a rich body of examples, Du Mez seeks to use a cultural historical methodology to identify the roots of the militant masculinity which has pervaded the American evangelical tradition.¹

While Du Mez eschews theological distinction for a culturally identified picture of evangelicalism, an understanding of other historians’ previous conceptions of the borders of evangelicalism is crucial to contextualize her contribution. Prior to the 1930s, the term “evangelical” in the United States referred to a plethora of movements and denominations.² With exceptions, these denominations split along a fundamentalist-modernist binary. Beginning in the 1910s, fundamentalists promoted the necessity of spiritual salvation, proclaimed an imminent apocalypse, and took a stance against modernists, who strived for societal reform.³ While modernists and their theologically liberal descendants secured control of American Protestant institutions, their influence began to plateau during the 1930s.⁴ Simultaneously, fundamentalists used nontraditional avenues, such as educational institutions and independent denominations to gain influence. However, evangelicals’ power within this marginal

¹ Kristin Kobes Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne: How White Evangelicals Corrupted a Faith and Fractured a Nation* (New York: Liveright, 2020), 14.

² Mark Noll, “Timothy L. Smith, George Marsden, David Bebbington and Anglo-American Evangelicalism,” in *Making Evangelical History: Faith, Scholarship and the Evangelical Past*, ed. Andrew Atherstone and David Ceri Jones (New York: Routledge, 2019), 237.

³ Matthew Avery Sutton, *Jerry Falwell and the Rise of the Religious Right: A Brief History with Documents* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin’s, 2013), 5.

⁴ Sutton, *Jerry Falwell*, 6.

movement was limited by Protestants’ lasting control of the Christian voice, as perceived by secular groups.

The National Association of Evangelicals (NAE) in 1943, with its adherents calling themselves ‘neo-evangelicals,’ was organized, in part, to circumvent this reality.⁵ With Harold Ockenga at the helm, the NAE was meant to promote existent forms of evangelicalism, not to create a new denomination, while avoiding the interdenominational conflict which had characterized previous efforts at cooperation among fundamentalists.⁶ Ockenga and his fellow leaders sought to maintain fundamental beliefs while increasing the public visibility of evangelicalism, rejecting the anti-intellectual stereotype they had been assigned in national media.⁷ This “post-fundamentalist” evangelicalism was more open to alliance with other non-traditionally evangelical denominations, and included conservative churches such as the Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the Christian Reformed Church, certain Holiness and Pentecostal churches, Southern Baptists, Mennonites, and a few African-American churches.⁸ Thus, the brand of evangelicalism that has exerted overriding influence in American political culture over the past half-century can be characterized as an evolution of the fundamentalist strain. During the 1960s and 70s, evangelicals became increasingly involved in politics outside of the church, prompted by national turmoil surrounding race, education, and traditional family dynamics.⁹ This involvement culminated in the rise of the Religious Right, and evangelicals’ association with the political fates of the Republican Party in the late 1970s and early 1980s.¹⁰

20th century scholars of evangelicalism fell, primarily, into two methodological camps: theologically oriented scholars and historians. Those who took a normative approach sought to define evangelicalism in terms of its theological convictions and practices, using statistical methods and case studies.¹¹ Difficulties inherent to this method include the problematic nature of identifying the groups that are studied, the impossibility of the separation of environmental factors from theology, and the use of scientific methodology to chart the fluidity of religious

⁵ Noll, “Anglo-American Evangelicalism,” 237.

⁶ Robert H. Krapohl and Charles H. Lippy, *The Evangelicals: A Historical, Thematic, and Biographical Guide* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 55.

⁷ Sutton, *Jerry Falwell*, 6-7.

⁸ Noll, “Anglo-American Evangelicalism,” 238.

⁹ Sutton, *Jerry Falwell*, 13-14.

¹⁰ Sutton, 20.

¹¹ Krapohl and Lippy, *The Evangelicals*, 5. This group includes William W. Wells, James Davison Hunter, and others.

belief.¹² The formative consensus in this group coalesced around David Bebbington’s distillation of British evangelical convictions into four tenets: “(1) Conversionism, the belief that lives need to be changed; (2) Activism, the expression of the gospel of Christ in effort; (3) Biblicism, a particular regard for the Bible; and (4) Crucicentrism, a stress on the sacrifice of Christ on the cross.”¹³ Mark Noll and Derek Tidball have applied the Bebbington theory to evangelicalism in the United States.

The second methodological group is occupied by historians that often conceive of themselves as “observer-participants;” religiously evangelical historians often fall into this category.¹⁴ George M. Marsden, Timothy Smith, Mark A. Noll, and Nathan O. Hatch have formed the backbone of this tradition in the United States, carrying the overriding goal of underscoring “the significant role of evangelicalism throughout U.S. history.”¹⁵ Propelling evangelical history into the mainstream academic world, these historians provided the quality of scholarship and intellectual maturity to designate American evangelicalism as a worthy subject of non-evangelical historical interest.¹⁶ Major historiographical debates have concerned the division between the Calvinistic/Reformed tradition, occupied by Marsden and Noll, and the Arminian/Wesleyan/Holiness view.¹⁷ The Calvinistic/Reformed perspective claims Puritan ancestry, and, historically, has “emphasized ideas and theological propositions,” while viewing neo-evangelicals as reformers of a fundamentalist subculture.¹⁸ Scholars in this tradition have also possessed a vested interest in the restoration of American evangelicalism to national prominence. Du Mez’s focus on culture, rather than conviction, and lack of emphasis on denominational distinction situate her outside of this historiographical debate.

Recently, cultural historians, with whom Du Mez identifies herself,¹⁹ have contributed a third, distinct frame of analysis to the field. Arguing that “what it means to be an evangelical has always depended

¹² Krapohl and Lippy, *The Evangelicals*, 6.

¹³ Krapohl and Lippy, 7.

¹⁴ Krapohl and Lippy, 7.

¹⁵ Krapohl and Lippy, 4; Noll, “Anglo-American Evangelicalism,” 241, 45.

¹⁶ Noll, “Anglo-American Evangelicalism,” 245.

¹⁷ Krapohl and Lippy, *The Evangelicals*, 7-9. The Arminian/Wesleyan/Holiness view is outside the scope of Du Mez’s work, but is characterized by scholarship which seeks to emphasize the influence of Methodists and Wesleyan movements in American history, in contrast to the Calvinistic/Reformed concentration on the Calvinistic tradition.

¹⁸ Krapohl and Lippy, *The Evangelicals*, 8.

¹⁹ Kristin Kobes Du Mez, interview with author, April 5, 2021.

on the world beyond the faith," du Mez powerfully argues for the validity of a methodology that takes stock of the lived realities of evangelicalism.²⁰ Du Mez does not view "real," theological evangelicalism as extricable from "supposed" cultural evangelicalism; rather, she concentrates on evaluating the influence of conservative evangelicals on church culture.²¹ This cultural view also allows Du Mez to consider figures such as John Wayne, who did not contribute to traditionally defined evangelical theology, as cultivators of militancy on the Religious Right.²² Wayne, an actor who represented a rapidly politicizing "old-fashioned, retrograde masculinity," was not evangelical, and used crass, profane language, making him an unlikely ally, when evangelicalism is viewed as a set of theological tenets.²³ However, in Du Mez's frame of the faith tradition as a social construction, Wayne's promise of redemptive violence can be viewed as part of the American evangelical fabric, and as an early precursor to the counterintuitive popularity of brash, violent, patriarchal rhetoric within the church.

Evangelical culture is the throughline in Du Mez's book, forming the maypole around which she wraps her argument for the consistent presence of militant masculinity in American evangelicalism. Du Mez's exploration of masculinity in American evangelicalism begins with an identification of precursors in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In the 1890s, masculine work no longer entailed the inherently virile agriculturalism of the earlier 19th century.²⁴ The changing values associated with work, combined with the modernization of womanhood and increased immigration from Europe, caused a crisis of identity for white Protestant men.²⁵ In response, Christian men began to insist that Christianity was "masculine, militant, [and] warlike," in contrast to the restrained Christianity of the Victorian era.²⁶ Dormant in mainline Protestantism after the horrors of the First World War, militant masculinity became the purview of the fundamentalist strand of American evangelicalism in the decades following the war.²⁷ This retention of militancy facilitated fundamentalists' alienation from their mainstream counterparts in the

²⁰ Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 5-6.

²¹ Du Mez, 8-10.

²² Du Mez, 58.

²³ Du Mez, 58.

²⁴ Du Mez, 14.

²⁵ Du Mez, 14.

²⁶ Du Mez, 17.

²⁷ Du Mez, 20-21.

post-World War I era.²⁸ Fundamentalists’ ability to understand catastrophe as part of a dispensationalist framework for Christ’s return enabled them to persist in their “combative” assertion of “fundamental truths.”²⁹

Du Mez argues that the formation of the National Association of Evangelicals in 1942 was an effort to re-brand evangelicalism from the increasingly alienated fundamentalism, while retaining a level of militancy.³⁰ The character of this movement, with the NAE at the helm, underscores the connection between culture and theology. Prior to the creation of the NAE, fundamentalists had built a network of cultural powerhouses such as publishing companies, schools, churches, and mission organizations. Du Mez traces this inclination to the broad influence of evangelicals outside of denominational structures, who used televangelism, radio, print media, and educational institutions to assert their values.³¹ In order to survive, these institutions needed to identify themselves with a broad, nondenominational evangelicalism; in doing so, they opened space for celebrities to exert influence on this “more generic evangelical ethos.”³² Billy Graham, the quintessential celebrity preacher, was one of the first, and most well-remembered, iterations of this cultural evangelicalism.³³ John Wayne’s presence in this group of evangelical celebrities, in Du Mez’s view, was substantiated by his “embodiment of heroic masculinity,” exhibited in his roles in films glorifying “valiant white men battling (and usually subduing) nonwhite populations.”³⁴ Wayne’s cultural presence contributed to a rapidly cementing evangelical identity centering around white patriarchy.³⁵ By identifying the decentralized strategies and character of NAE and post-NAE evangelicalism, Du Mez effectively makes a case for the necessity of a cultural historical approach, which allows for the consideration of Graham and Wayne as drivers of belief, alongside ministers and denominations. Traditional methods of theological distinction and statistical analysis cannot account for the influence of celebrities and consumerized evangelicalism, making necessary the presence of nondenominational structures and institutions in an analysis of American evangelicalism

²⁸ Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 20-21.

²⁹ Du Mez, 20.

³⁰ Du Mez, 21.

³¹ Du Mez, 29.

³² Du Mez, 30.

³³ Du Mez, 23.

³⁴ Du Mez, 56.

³⁵ Du Mez, 32-33.

during the 20th century.

Evangelicals’ self-positioning against the crises of the second half of the 20th century, in Du Mez’s view, provided fertile ground for the retention of fundamentalist militancy, represented in cultural products.³⁶ In the foreign policy sphere, the Cold War provided a golden opportunity for evangelical militancy to appear necessary in the face of a looming atheist enemy.³⁷ Americans within the emergent Religious Right solidified their defense of white patriarchy in the face of attacks on “family values,” the war in Vietnam, and civil rights, determining the shape of evangelical political engagement during the 1960s and 70s, increasing the centrality of masculine authority to conservative evangelical identity.³⁸ Figures such as Tim LaHaye, Beverly LaHaye, and Jerry Falwell cultivated a domestic prioritization of patriarchal authority.³⁹ Through violent fiction, guides for submissive wives, and Jerry Falwell’s Moral Majority organization, a defense of the traditional family was inextricably tied to Cold War militarism.⁴⁰ When the Cold War ended, and evangelicals were left without a foreign enemy, masculine, violent rhetoric could be adapted to wars of culture and attacks on filial hierarchy, due to the concurrent inculcation of patriarchal authority as a value to be defended.⁴¹ However, this adaptation was not universal, and post-Cold War evangelicalism threatened to shift along old militant-moderate fault lines, with many evangelicals adopting more expansive priorities, such as global poverty and the AIDS epidemic.⁴² In the absence of the Bolshevik threat, it became more difficult to necessitate Cold War-style militant brashness.⁴³

On September 11, 2001, any confusion around evangelicals’ post-Cold War political stance disappeared. Muslims were the new Bolsheviks, presenting a threat against which evangelicals could define themselves.⁴⁴ Foreign and domestic policy were, once again, in sync; there was moral clarity in the War on Terror, and this certainty was extended into evangelical education, with young men serving America’s need for “strong, heroic men to defend the country at home

³⁶ Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 13, 33.

³⁷ Du Mez, 132.

³⁸ Du Mez, 11.

³⁹ Du Mez, 89.

⁴⁰ Du Mez, 89-99.

⁴¹ Du Mez, 132.

⁴² Du Mez, 148-9.

⁴³ Du Mez, 149.

⁴⁴ Du Mez, 180.

and abroad.”⁴⁵ Pastors such as Ted Haggard, Mark Driscoll, Doug Wilson preached messages of godly warfare, female submission, and male authority, while military men served as bulwarks for civilian churchgoers.⁴⁶ In the home, the Christian homeschool movement and associated media instilled “biblical patriarchy.”⁴⁷ As the internet started to take hold, organizations such as The Gospel Coalition used it to put prominent evangelical preachers in conversation with one another, setting aside sectarian differences to defend the supremacy of patriarchal authority in “desperate times.”⁴⁸ After 9/11, masculine evangelicalism was shaped by a process of radicalization, hastened by the expansion of a network of influential evangelical men, who came up in an era with a clear moral prescription for Americans’ role at home and abroad.⁴⁹

The push for militarism in the 2000s was not characteristic of every evangelical. However, Du Mez argues that the decentralized authority of evangelical men’s networks blurred marginal expressions of more extreme rhetoric and more “center” ideas, and a new orthodoxy of patriarchal power defined the boundaries of an increasingly internally fluid evangelicalism.⁵⁰ Bastions of evangelical consumer culture upheld this orthodoxy by marginalizing dissenters, creating a more radical evangelical masculinity.⁵¹ The Obama presidency provided the opportunity for the Religious Right to cultivate fear among constituents.⁵² Leaders such as Wayne Grudem derided LGBT rights in the name of religious freedom, demanded border closures, and promoted their political prescriptions as part of their defense of a patriarchal Christianity moving towards political irrelevance.⁵³ By identifying the increasing radicalization of masculine rhetoric as an outgrowth of an evangelicalism defined by cultural, rather than theological boundaries, Du Mez brilliantly provides evidence for the validity of her method, while asserting her central thesis of the cultivated presence of militant masculinity in evangelical culture.

In the cultural context Du Mez has provided, evangelical support for Donald Trump is not an aberration, mystery, polling error,

⁴⁵ Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 180.

⁴⁶ Du Mez, 194, 209, 214.

⁴⁷ Du Mez, 188.

⁴⁸ Du Mez, 200-202.

⁴⁹ Du Mez, 204.

⁵⁰ Du Mez, 204.

⁵¹ Du Mez, 204.

⁵² Du Mez, 248.

⁵³ Du Mez, 239-243.

or a choice of the lesser of two evils. Fifty years of cultivated fear in evangelical constituencies provided ground ripe for a “protector, an aggressive, heroic, manly man,” and no other candidate for the presidency in 2016 better exemplified this than Donald Trump.⁵⁴ To many, Trump is not the most theologically Christian candidate. Du Mez’s explanation of Trump’s popularity among evangelicals places the Religious Right’s support within the context of a five-decade-long effort at promoting the values Trump embodied in evangelical circles. Thus, the evangelical alliance with Trump was not illogical; rather, it was a response necessitated by a long history of cultural militancy and popular expressions of patriarchal power within the faith.⁵⁵ Trump’s election and the increasing influence and prevalence of culturally defined evangelicalism in the decades preceding his rise to power prompt the question: “By the early 2000s, was it even possible to separate “cultural Christianity” from a purer, more authentic form of American evangelicalism? What did it mean to be an evangelical? Did it mean upholding a set of doctrinal truths, or did it mean embracing a culture-wars application of those truths?”⁵⁶ A cultural definition of evangelicalism, Du Mez argues, provides the framework within which to identify evangelicalism with “a God-and-country religiosity,” fearful of outsiders and elites, and “organized around a deep attachment to militarism and patriarchal masculinity.”⁵⁷ By consistently drawing the link between the mobilization of an expansive evangelical cultural network and political behavior, Du Mez provides sound grounding for the utility of a cultural historical explanation of the probability of evangelicals’ support for Trump.

Du Mez’s book does not seek to identify the particular stances of individual denominations; rather, it characterizes evangelicalism as a cultural-religious movement that has transcended traditional denominational lines. This view, taken to its limits, might suffer from what historian Mark Noll has described as an “unfortunate blurring of religious categories.”⁵⁸ Du Mez’s prioritization of cultural figures occasionally results in a nebulous idea of what evangelicalism means: when evangelicalism is culturally defined, it encompasses homeschoolers, Jerry Falwell, preachers, military figures, movie stars, and many in between. For those without knowledge of the shape and

⁵⁴ Du Mez, 253.

⁵⁵ Du Mez, 253.

⁵⁶ Du Mez, 246.

⁵⁷ Du Mez, 246.

⁵⁸ Noll, “Anglo-American Evangelicalism,” 241.

influence of evangelical cultural institutions, Du Mez’s definition-less description of evangelicalism may, at points, be slightly frustrating. However, this confusion speaks to a larger issue in church history. Du Mez has sought to describe evangelicalism as lived experience, rather than theology, and, in doing so, has provided an astute examination of the pervasiveness of masculine rhetoric in communities of evangelical adherence.⁵⁹ If her history carries potential for denominational blurring because it has sought to aptly characterize the decentralized nature of evangelical authority in the face of a storied tradition of theologically defined evangelical history, then, it may be high time to reevaluate the relevance of denominational distinctions in assessing political sensibilities among evangelicals.

While Du Mez’s adherence to a cultural vision of American evangelicalism might prove trying to those who would seek to define the movement along clear theological boundaries, her methodology represents evangelicalism as it is, and has been, experienced. This approach appears more suitable to explain evangelical voter behavior than previous attempts at theological distinction and statistical analysis. For example, a theological definition of the evangelical tradition would subsume Black churches that adhere to the Bebbington definition under the evangelical umbrella, but it would not allow for the ironic reality: these congregations would not self-identify as part of the movement.⁶⁰ Du Mez’s frame of analysis allows for the inclusion of white supremacist rhetoric, a non-theological conviction, as an element of evangelical masculinity, underscoring the need for a combination of cultural and theological approaches to ascertain the complex, multiculturally influenced nature of evangelical self-awareness and movement identity. High levels of theological illiteracy have pervaded evangelical churches.⁶¹ Despite many evangelicals’ view of themselves as “Bible-believing Christians,” “evangelicalism itself entails a broader set of deeply held values communicated through symbol, ritual, and political allegiances.”⁶² Thus, traditional definitions of theological adherence are aspirational, and do not account for the true influences on the convictions of evangelicals.⁶³

By presenting violent masculinity as a product of historical contingency, rather than an essential tenet of Christian doctrine, Du

⁵⁹ Kristin Kobes Du Mez, interview with author, April 5, 2021.

⁶⁰ Noll, “Anglo-American Evangelicalism,” 253.

⁶¹ Kristin Kobes Du Mez, interview with author, April 5, 2021.

⁶² Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 297.

⁶³ Kristin Kobes Du Mez, interview with author, April 5, 2021.

Mez provides the frame for more pointed, accurate, and culturally conscious criticisms of evangelicalism, and problematizes the notion that patriarchy is simply Biblical.⁶⁴ Instead of normatively criticizing the lacking influence of religious doctrine in evangelical circles, Du Mez observes the phenomenon, then asks the question: If not theology, then what?⁶⁵ *Jesus and John Wayne* has provided the beginnings of an answer. Further work in evangelical history would do well to heed Du Mez's call for a cultural approach to the discipline, and the removal of traditional historical boundaries, in favor of a more accurate account of the evangelical experience. With *Jesus and John Wayne*, Kristin Kobes Du Mez has both succeeded in ascertaining the historical development of militant evangelical masculinity, and provided a sound argument for the necessity of cultural history to studies of American evangelicalism.

⁶⁴ Du Mez, *Jesus and John Wayne*, 14.

⁶⁵ Kristin Kobes Du Mez, interview with author, April 5, 2021.

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Our Boys in Uniform

Youth Fetish Culture, Sexuality, and Masculinity in Early Post-Unification Berlin

Julius Miller

Introduction

In a monolithic 1950s neoclassical industrial powerplant, now known as Berghain, Lab.Oratory, the second floor sex 'chambers' of the erotically eccentric club are home to leather slings, cages, an empty bathtub, a "wet room," and a leather swing above the bar.¹ Touted as a "real playground and a theatrical environment," this sexually-driven labyrinth of minimalist house music, fetish fashion, and the brutalist residue of Germany's past finds its true foundations in the 1990s: an all-male, "pervy event," called *Snax*.² The first *Snax Event*, an all male fetish party, was held in 1992 in the functionalist Nazi Bonatz Bunker. Three years later, the bunker hosted 'Sexperimenta,' a fetish exhibition and ensuing candlelit sadomasochistic extravaganza; Niklas Maak, a German editorialist, writes of the rapid transformations of the Bonatz Nazi Bunker and the ethnogenesis of this particular fetish subculture: "In the 1990s the techno and fetish scene entered the bunker, and if one were to believe those that were there, it seemed like a strange return to history that grim-looking people in leather coats carrying riding whips were suddenly making a reappearance there."³

The once regimented bunker therefore served a new function of becoming a dystopic and abstract atmosphere: a communal space of memory, social integration, deconstruction, and a topographical and sociological loci for collectively decentering corporeality.⁴ Furthermore, it became an emancipating showroom for perversion and particularly distorting fashion and imbuing identity with fetish fantasy. Usage of the bunker gave new use to a stagnant locale of history, allowing for

¹ Luis Manuel Garcia. "'With Every Inconceivable Finesse, Excess, and Good Music': Sex, Affect, and Techno at Snax Club in Berlin." (New York: Berghahn Books, 2019). 76.

² "Pervy Event," here is one of the 'warnings' on each *Snax* Flyer.

³ Niklas Maak. "Art Under Construction." (Berlin. O32 Magazine, 2007). 2.

⁴ For more on the phenomenological experience of "decentering corporeality" see Oliver Klaasen. "Swimming against the Hetero-and Homonormative Tide: A Queer Reading of Wolfgang Tillmans' Photo Installation (2004-2009) in the Panorama Bar at Berlin's Berghain." (London: UCL Press, 2019). 142.

Germans to interact with the locale of a previous era while naturally superimposing the experience of the 1990s male fetish scene onto the past of Germany. The structure of youth pursuing collective memory in reusing a Nazi Bunker as a sexual playzone mirrors the choice of refashioning leather uniforms; this reversal of power dynamics suggests a remasculinization as well as a mental demilitarization. Ultimately, the totalizing deconstruction of gender and sexuality in the '90s allowed for the reconstruction of a reinvigorated German male identity that both maintained a distance from Germany's past and actively engaged with Germany's regression. This discourse proved essential for youth social integration in post-unification Berlin. It's no coincidence that Berghain combined the neighborhoods of Kreuzberg (West) and Friedrichshain (East) for its namesake. But why and how did fetish fashion and culture emerge as a way for male youth Berliners to grapple and reconcile with history and memory while forge a new identity in post-unification Berlin?

By visually examining four flyers, I will argue that the homosexual male fetish youth groups of the 1990s were engaging with the psychological phenomenon known as *metanoia*, a process of self-healing dependent on "melting down" past trauma and developing a newly adapted identity.⁵ Metanoia, as a psychological process, relies on the comprehension of history and memory, as it is ultimately a mental refashioning of old memories in a way that allows for the individual's progression beyond precious instances of trauma. Fetish fashion and ephemera temporalized history, an act that was omitted in the federal government's attempt at social integration. The use of fetish objects and fashion enriched the process of remasculinization through a dual process of demilitarization and dehumanization, both physically and mentally. The permissible arenas of fetish culture, as seen through these flyers, were places in which memories had and would be made, and served as a *lieux des memoires* for homosexual male youth groups, becoming an emancipating process altogether.⁶ These were places in which they could break away from old cultural regimes, and pursue a more self-realized identity as a collective. Ensuingly, this essay will discuss the problems of research introduced by this study, a brief introduction into the problems of social integration in "New Berlin," and a wide-ranging methodological exploration of Snax flyers as well

⁵ Carl Jung uses metanoia in many texts. I am using: Petruska Clarkson. *On Psychotherapy*. (1993). 57.

⁶ Pierre Nora. "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux De Mémoire." *Représentations*, no. 26, 1989, pp. 7-24.

as the ephemeral and expressive nature of flyers in general. Although I only focus mainly on the 1994 Snax flyer, I will briefly examine two other flyers from 1996 and 1997.

Methodologies

To formulate a thesis on this period and topic, alternative methods to traditional historiography must be permitted. Although plenty of sociological, ethnographical, and anthropological research exists in the field of 1990s Germany, historiography on the subject is nascent. Additionally, while there has been intensive work on German masculinity, homosexuality, and the discourse of techno music, few have combined the three with notions of memory. One reason for the tendency to conduct ethnographic as well as philosophical research regarding 1990s Germany is due to the lack of definitive primary sources and more generally the purposeful mysteriousness of the scene. For these reasons, I combine several methodological approaches: gender and LGBTQ+ historiography, semiotics, visual cultures studies, and, lastly, a socio-topographical schema in particular to synthesize the slippery concept of memory and history.

Taking a similar approach to Poiger's work on the *Neue Frau* and Pierre Bourdieu's work on cultural production, this paper will engage with visual cultures, media, and representation (flyers) as a historical framework for understanding "structural relations ... between social positions that are both occupied and manipulated by social agents which may be individuals, groups, or institutions."⁷ Since this paper deals with the intersection of history, memory, and material, historian Pierre Nora's theory of *lieux des memoires*, sociologist Maurice Halbwachs' theory of collective memory, and Carl Jung's theory of *metanoia* oscillate throughout my research. Emphasizing these attributes, this paper is a socio-historical paper on male youth groups in 1990s Berlin and not a psychoanalytical approach to fetish. Nor is it a paper that focuses on *Musikwissenschaft* as a field. A final and essential note on the methods and structure of this paper: youth shall be defined not in terms of age and development, as Aries does, but rather be classified as an ethnogenetic metaphor for a renewed, transformative identity that invokes a generational sense of 'turnover.'

⁷ Pierre Bourdieu. "Social Space and Symbolic Power." (1989). 17.

A Brief Summary of The Problems of "New" Berlin, Memory, and Integration

"Image-making is central to the business of reconstructing the 'New Berlin'." -Silver 2006⁸

The German Federal government's neoliberal policies resurrected after the collapse of the Wall were futile attempts at social integration that led to a haphazard demolition and construction process, deindustrialization, rapid unemployment, and deep-rooted segregation; many German historians have noted that while the wall may have come down, a "Wall in the mind" still existed between the "Wessis" and "Ossis" both politically and socioculturally.⁹ The government's integration of East Berlin, its renaming of streets, restructuring of neighborhoods, and its demolition of any remnants of its communist past, was an act of "willful forgetting."¹⁰ In addition, their policies disregarded public opinion. Much of the land that was subsequently left vacant by the collapse of the wall became a debate of memory, of who and what will be remembered. Ultimately, the process of creating a "New Berlin," one distant from its past, embodied a performative process that dismantled any notion of "invented heritage" and "collective memory," or in Nora's case *lieux des memoires*. German historian Karen Till writes:

As the capital of five different Germanys, Berlin represents the "unstable optic identity" of the nation, for it is the city where, more than any other city, German nationalism and modernity have been staged and restaged, represented and contested. Berlin is a city that cannot be contained by marketing representations of time, of the new.¹¹

New was not an option for real integration. A post-apocalyptic and "haunted city" as Brian Ladd writes, the expedited process of making "New Berlin" not only left many youth unemployed and houseless, but also led to a general psychological aura of disillusionment.¹² Additionally, the idea of "New Berlin" derecognized and excluded many youth cultural groups. To strip a culture of memory, whether material or non-material, is to strip youth of a large foundational aspect of their collective identity. After all, what made Berlin an amazing city was its "ever changing spaces, representations,

⁸ Hilary Silver. "Introduction: Social Integration in the 'New' Berlin." (*German Politics & Society*, 2006). 2.

⁹ Hilary Silver. 12.

¹⁰ Andreas Huyssen. "The Voids of Berlin." (*Critical Inquiry*: 1997). 57-81.

¹¹ Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. (Minneapolis, 2005). 5.

¹² Brian Ladd. *The Ghosts of Berlin: Confronting German History in the Urban Landscape*. (Chicago, 1997).

economics and political systems made and remade by people in the past and present. Berlin is a city of multiple modernities."¹³

The fetish scene as well as fetish fashion provided the essential ephemeral materials and non-materials to reconstruct a metaphysical memory for the gay male youth groups of the 1990s. Fetish fashion very much so served an essential part in creating symbolic lieux des memoires by reworking themes, representations, and sentiments from Germany's past into a new framework for Germany's present. The mere use of fetish as an ideological and psychoanalytic standpoint, not only connotes a sense of fantasy, but it fuels a sense of power and perception.¹⁴ To add to that, the objects of fetish fashion are a linkage between identity, desire, and material items that connote these affectations to the observer. The objects as well as the sexual codifications, specifically at work in the fetish scenes of 1990s Berlin, tend to reflect an ongoing dialogue with history: a leather uniform, a gas mask, boots serve as just a few examples. Furthermore, the representations of power and masculinity also refer to historical modes of representation. Ultimately, the emergence of the fetish scene in the early 1990s was a cornerstone of renewed social integration in post-unification Berlin as much as any governmental policies enacted to combine the two disparate cities. The unification policies of 1990s Berlin were futile attempts at integration, while the fetish scene proved that projects from the ground up -- organized by youth -- were the real engines for progressive, collective, and heritage-based social integration. Thus, it was the "poor but sexy" Berlin, not the bureaucratic Berlin, that set the cultural tone in the 90s and early 2000s.¹⁵

Snax Flyers: The Medium of Masculine Metanoia

A key component to the 1990s club scene was the discreet dissemination of information via small flyers; the flyers often included ambiguous and cryptic designs -- both figurative and abstract, the DJs playing that night, the location, and often a loose theme accompanied with perhaps heedless rules. Direct yet mysterious, these flyers performed a mandatory role in the Berlin party culture -- of immediacy in terms of announcing the event's logistics, but also of temptation, which appeared in the form of visual motifs and evocative graphic power. Due to the explosion of the house and techno scene in Berlin and

¹³ Karen E. Till, *The New Berlin: Memory, Politics, Place*. (Minneapolis, 2005). 50-51.

¹⁴ Valerie Steele. *Fetish: fashion, sex, and power* (Oxford University Press: New York, 1996). 13.

¹⁵ This was the proclamation of Mayor Wowereit in Frey 2003.

subsequently its nomadic reliance on abandoned spaces and likewise the new interpersonal interest in technology -- at home printers, graphic design programs, and copy machines, flyers emerged as a serious art form. On the one hand, these small posters served as a democratic DIY conduit for youth expression and on the other, they served the much more inconspicuous function of circulating secretive access to bunkers, parties, clubs, and happenings. Similar to the dual function of the flyers, Mike Riemel, a Berliner himself and an avid collector and anthropologist of club flyers, situates the media phenomenon of flyers in both the topographical and sociological realm of the *soziotope*: "Concrete living contexts for groups...closely related to the physical environment."¹⁶ As evidenced by the mere title of this twenty-year anthological survey of the medium (*Flyer Soziotope*), flyers were not only integral to the topographical blueprint of New Berlin, but they were a testament to the youth's reexamination of the post-industrial society of Berlin, serving a similar role to the architectural reappropriation of abandoned buildings.¹⁷ To use Alain Touraine's sociological theory on self-producing societies, the flyers served as materials for the "symbolic capacity of social actors to construct a system of knowledge and the technical tools that allow them to intervene in their own functioning, act upon themselves, and thereby produce society."¹⁸

Reeking of Futurist-inspired aesthetics and strategies, 1990s club flyers actively pursued a sort of minimalist and dystopian reconstruction of Berlin. To link this futurist aesthetic with the past, the flyers balance their dystopian manner by relying on the predominant visual vernacular of Soviet Constructivist and Bauhaus design and typography. Images of old German buildings, abstract shapes morphed of entangled machinery, satirization of early and mid 20th century German advertisements amongst many other iconographic developments not only reflected the chaotic and energetic environment of club interiors and themes, but they constituted a pictorial language for German youth to forge a reinvigorated and post-apocalyptic landscape of the newly unified Berlin. Ultimately, the visual expression of the flyers presented a dual reflection and transcendence of Germany's past economic, historical, and social trauma. In doing so,

¹⁶ Mike Riemel. *Flyer Soziotope: Topography of a Media Phenomenon*. (Actar/ Archiv der Jugendkulturen Verlag: Berlin, 2006), 5.

¹⁷ Albrow, Martin (1998): Auf Reisen jenseits der Heimat. Soziale Landschaften in einer globalen Stadt. In: Beck, Ulrich (Hg.): *Kinder der Freiheit*. 288-314. The definition used here was defined in Riemel's *Flyer Soziotope*.

¹⁸ Alain Touraine. *The Self-Production of Society*. (Chicago, 1977). 7.

this visual expression engaged with the metamorphosis of Berlin youth as a *metanoia*, "a spontaneous attempt of the psyche to heal itself of unbearable conflict by melting down and then being reborn in a more adaptive form."¹⁹

In the explicit example of the Snax event flyers, they engaged with the psychological attempt of *metanoia* by "melting down" historical German forms of masculinity and in doing so "rebirthed" a more "adaptive" societal form of sexuality and masculinity. Snax club flyers united this nuanced and historically recognizable aesthetic with hardcore images of male experimentation: "Pervy Events," the flyer states, acting as a warning to those who would find the events too extreme, but also as an invitation to the youth of Berlin who had already identified these events as desirable. These flyers often perverted and distorted traditional symbols of masculinity. These flyers do not completely discontinue prior symbols and historical images of males in Germany. Instead, the graphics of Snax club flyers rearranged and reformatted earlier German iconography -- similar to the ideological and purely utilitarian reuse of pre-existing Nazi structures for club spaces. In doing so, they rely on the shared trauma and public memory of Berlin's youth, but engage in a reutilization of the motifs of previous German periods. An animalistic and brutalist way of portraying male bodies surfaced that often incorporated the use of leather, bondage, nudity, and a mechanical impulse; in addition to this portrayal, the flyers usually fused male bodies together, assembling a singular, collective body. The act of mechanical reassemblage and the amorphic combining of bodies blatantly refers to an aura of ambivalence surrounding homosexual acts. But, perhaps a more expansive framework would be to interpret this visual muddle as evidence of the complex configuration of fetish, homosexuality, the musical and artistic advents of new technology, and the grappling phenomena of dealing with and recognizing the young Berliners' connection with the past and their expedited reshaping of Berlin's future. The flyers make clear the transformation of an occupied and violent urban territory into a sexual, hedonistic, and united playzone and naturally, they demarcate the powerful transformation of ephemeral materials into an indispensable trait of the emerging youth subculture.²⁰

¹⁹ Clarkson. 50-51. (See Note 5).

²⁰ For more on the transformation of Berlin into a "sexual playzone," see Katharina Gerstenberger. "Play Zones: The Erotics of the New Berlin." (*The German Quarterly*, 2003, pp. 259-272.).

Engaging with the nature of the club flyer as a "semiotic playground" with a codified visual language recognizes the complimentary genesis of an esoteric subcultural group; thus, 1990s club flyers reflect the development of youth culture in the early 1990s.²¹ Ensuingly, I take a visual and formalist approach to three flyers from the 1990s Snax Events at Berghain, Ostgut, and Bunker to evidence that the male-dominated homosexual and fetish youth group recognized the nuances of previous German sexual and gender politics in order to construct a new male identity: one that was no longer regulated by the stricter norms of previous social regimes, but was instead able to represent and experiment with itself through acts of homosexuality, overt fetishism, and reappropriation of previous generational ideals surrounding manhood. In addition to distorting historical imagery of masculinity, each flyer integrates either leather fetish or an empowering reversal of German combattent gear. The flyers interact with history in different ways: the 1994 revitalizes Weimar conceptions of homosexuality, the '96 flyer with fashion, materials, and aesthetics, and lastly the '97 flyer with form and medium.

The 1994 Snax event flyer (Fig. 1) dually reflects and inverts the tenuous notions of masculinity and homosexuality in German society, most notably re-enlisting the Weimar debate of militaristic masculinity contrasted with sensualized "comrade-friendship" -- a debate that carries remnants throughout 20th century German sexual and gender politics.²² Two shirtless, hairless, and faceless men attack each other at once. The one on the left bears a large tattoo on his back and his shoulder; his left elbow awkwardly protrudes upwards while the other man's arms wrap around his back. Both of their heads tilt in a diagonal direction. This inelegant mitigation between the moment before a liberating hug and the energetic charge of a wrestling headlock blurs the line between violence and love, uniting social aspects that would have been discreet in previous German notions of society. The bodies become one gestural form -- a choreographed dance. Understanding the fetish scene and the Snax events as strictly all male parties requires an examination that engages with the visual culture of the flyer through the lens of an all-male institution; in this sense, the ambivalent violence represented in the flyer overtly reminds viewers of previous

²¹ Mike Riemel. *Flyer Soziotope: Topography of a Media Phenomenon*. (Actar / Archiv der Jugendkulturen Verlag: Berlin, 2006), 16.

²² Jason Crouthamel. "'Comradeship' and 'Friendship': Masculinity and Militarisation in Germany's Homosexual Emancipation Movement after the First World War." (Gender & History, Vol. 23, 2011). 111-129.

representations and conceptions of mostly all-male institutions, specifically the German military and the hedonistic slacker mentality of the belligerent 1980s German punks.

To start with the connection to the Weimar debate regarding masculinity and homosexuality and the German military, the image of two shirtless men fighting signifies the warrior trope, a challenging conception of "martial masculinity."²³ As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the two men in the flyer blend punk-like hardcoreness with physical love -- a visual synthesis for what Weimar homosexual activist groups were celebrating after World War I: war, comradeship, the "homosexual warrior," and love.²⁴ However, the flyer does not merely visually connect contemporaneous society with that of the Weimar; instead, the flyer, along with the other examples mentioned later in this section, very much so parodies, dispels, and discursively reissues Weimar representation of homosexuality to contemporaneously discover a new male identity and to also construct a relationship between the male and German nation that deconstructs previous connections to the nation. Prior to elaborating on this claim however, I find it necessary to contextualize the Weimar debate.²⁵

World War I ultimately generated this conflation of comradeship and the ultra-masculine hegemony of homosexuality. As post-war mainstream culture emphasized the homosexual community as a 'backstabbing' group of men, homosexual activist groups, mainly *Gemeinschaft der Eigenen* (GdE) and *Wissenschaftlich humanita res Komitee* (WhK) respectively run by opposing theorists Adolf Brand and sexologist Magnus Hirschfeld, relied on the image of the "homosexual warrior" and on the war as both a liberating experience for gay men and an indicator of the importance of gay men in society but in far different ways.²⁶ The war and thus the isolated figure of the warrior became the foundation for liberation. Oftentimes, in the GdE publication *Die Eigene*, writers would use the language of the war as well as the language of oppression as a defensive tactic. As a brief example of this, in B. Eden's combative article "Against What Do We Fight," he declares: "We

²³ Crouthamel, 111-129.

²⁴ Crouthamel, 114.

²⁵ I'm using the "Weimar Debate" here to refer to the ensuing paragraph as well as the brief introductory sentence at the beginning of this paragraph; the Weimar Debate refers to that of post-war conceptions of homosexuality and masculinity within activist groups.

²⁶ Wilhelm Deist, 'Der militärische Zusammenbruch des Kaiserreichs: Zur Realität der "Dolchstoßlegende"', in Wilhelm Deist (ed.), *Militär, Staat und Gesellschaft* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1991), pp. 211-33.

[homosexuals] fight for our liberation from undeserved slave shackles...every decent, intelligent, inverted man will strive, just like any decent heterosexual, to do his best for all of Germany," attempting here to use German nationalism to in fact protect homosexual men.²⁷ Expanding on these notions, G.P. Pfeiffer, another member of the GdE, manufactured the "homosexual warrior" as the "new man," a man who defies industrialization and refrains from modernity. Pfeiffer takes a humanist approach in connecting the man to the pastoral, the front, and thus the fatherland.²⁸

Hirschfield contracts a different position on the matter thus forming the dialectic of the Weimar sexual-emancipation debate. Whereas Brand and his followers saw the war as a liberating experience for it's valorizing prospects and friendship (or comradeship) as a solely erotic experience, Hirschfield understood the war to be an '*alternative universe*' where men engaged with new identities and thus felt more comfortable to express homosexuality; secondly, Hirschfield understood comradeship to be spritual phenomenon not a solely erotic one. An example -- oddly similar to the structures of Wanderfogel and the literary tools of the Nazi youth groups -- of war camaraderie was mentioned in a letter to the scientist:

One day there came an ensign from the cadet corps, Count L., with whom I immediately fell in love . . . Soon we became inseparable friends and the major and other older officers rejoiced at the splendid relationship which had grown up between superior and subordinate . . . To you, doctor, I can confess that we also engaged in sexual activity, but only rarely and in a thoroughly fine, aesthetic, but never punishable form. For two whole months we enjoyed our love happiness together.²⁹

For Hirschfield, who understood gay men to be a "third sex," homosexual men were able to utilize their masculine attributes for the war efforts and their effeminate attributes for the nurturing essence of companionship.³⁰ To conclude on this in-depth contextualization, WWI was an interesting conundrum for gay men and activists groups as it

²⁷ B. Eden, "Wogegen ka mpfen wir?", Die Freundschaft 3/13, Jahrgrang 1921, p.2

²⁸ G. P. Pfeiffer. *Mä nnerheldentum und Kameraden Liebe im Krieg: Eine Studie und Materialien-Sammlung* (Berlin: Adolf Brand Kunstverlag, 1925). 221.

²⁹ Hirschfield, *Sexual History of the War*. 135-6.

³⁰ Oosterhuis and Kennedy (eds), *Homosexuality and Male Bonding in Pre-Nazi Germany*, p. 2. See also Steakley, *Homosexual Emancipation Movement in Germany*, p. 25.

was a severely traumatic event but rife with opportunity for liberation. Another paradox existed, and as German historian Dagmar Herzog has most notably discussed, in that homosexual men were able to camouflage their consensual sex by wartime anonymity as well as rapid and often mobilization.³¹ Ultimately, Weimar society and WWI posed limits and made highly contestable the debate on homosexuality within male culture.

The visual system of the 1994 Snax flyer re-enacts this contention. Through its representation of the two male bodies, the flyer thus reflects this Weimar dialectic while furthering a nuanced version of the new German nation as well as a new relationship to ideals of the German male identity that had been formed by the ethnonationalism of previous *völkisch* ideology. This is not to say that the flyers completely eliminate these aspects of previous German culture from existence, but rather to say that they are, in the metanoic sense, engaging in a change of heart about what the core principles of German masculinity are to this generation of leather enthusiasts and fetish players. In some regards, the landscape for these men was as contentious as it had ever been, but through the reconsideration of former representations, they were able to reconcile traumatic aspects of a collective history.

Among the effects of these flyers is the deconstruction of the notion of the "homosexual warrior:" what misconstrues and distorts Weimar notions of masculinity and homosexuality is not only the inclusion of punk masculine identity, a structure built upon appropriating Nazi ultra-masculinity and heterosexuality, but more literally, the stamp of the Snax Events: "play safe." On top of the Snax parties aligning with the friendly and epicurean culture of the rave scene, the "play safe" moniker offers a juxtaposition to the militaristic masculinity represented in the flyer, transforming the two men as well as the viewer's gaze of the two men into the more flirtatious category of ecstatic love. In addition, "play safe" transforms the demilitarized mind and physical space into a playzone. The trivial notion of "play safe," alluding quite literally to sexual consensuality and health, is therefore a form of mental demilitarization and likewise a means of re-masculinization; Karen Hagermann as well as Uta Poiger use the same terms to contextualize the male youth groups that emerged directly after WWII in the 1950s and 60s.³² Even further the strictly verb-usage

³¹ Dagmar Herzog (ed.), *Brutality and Desire: War and Sexuality in Europe's Twentieth Century* (New York: Palgrave, 2009), p. 5

³² Christoph Treiblmayr. "Militarism Revisited: Masculinity and Conscription in Germany." *Journal of Contemporary History*, vol. 39, no. 4, 2004, pp. 649–656.

of "play," and then "suck -- try -- spit," a clear sexual innuendo, demands the attendee to participate, to experiment. The active participation of youth, as well as self-constituted image-making and organization of events, fueled the 1990s techno scene as well as the youth male-oriented fetish scene, constructing a new, unrestricted concept of youth mobilization that's far different from Weimar war mobilization.

Secondly, Pfieffer's notion of the "new man," one discouraged and unshackled from modern society and connected to the fatherland, is revoked as well. Not only that, but the figurative and textual reference to shackles and bodily restrictions becomes literal and physical. The tattooless man wears two leather wristbands, one on each wrist; the placement of the two leather wristbands should not go unnoticed. In the leather community, placement, or *flagging*, is a way of expressing your relationship and sexual identity and therefore a way of identification.³³ An extension of the ephemeral into the material world, *flagging* expands on the pictorial codification in club flyers. Here, two wristbands, one on each arm, connotes sexual versatility: dominance and submissiveness.³⁴ As the leather compresses his wrists, the men grip each other -- the fetish, or perhaps fantasy here, being violence as Steele notes, "to whip is to caress."³⁵ Instead of polemically resurrecting a definitively new man in *direct* opposition to the mainstream perspectives, the men of the Snax flyer embrace the physical repression of leather to imbue a new power dynamic in a Cagean like manner -- a way of *metanoia*.³⁶ Additionally, homosexual men were not attempting to deride industrialization but instead situate themselves within this dystopic post-unification landscape of post-production and post-industrialization Berlin, that in fact perhaps the fusion of these two bodies mirrors the fusion of a sampled song and a techno beat or the bunker and club decorations.

An obvious similarity between Weimar wartime homosexuality and post-unification Snax events is anonymity and militant collectivism. In the flyer, the two men's faces remain unseen. Likewise,

Furthermore: Poiger, Uta G. "A New, 'Western' Hero? Reconstructing German Masculinity in the 1950s." *Signs*, vol. 24, no. 1, 1998, pp. 147-162.

³³ Steele, 143.

³⁴ Steele, 143.

³⁵ Steele, 15.

³⁶ I use Cagean here to invoke the way in which John Cage, American artist, navigated his sexuality. See Jonathan D. Katz's "John Cage's Queer Silence or How to Avoid Making Matter's Worse," 1999, GLC: A Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies.

their shaved heads emphasize a collective unity. The interiors of fetish parties were often dark, ecstatic, loud, and chaotic; the location of these parties would also shift quite frequently, moving from train track warehouses, to bunkers, to other abandoned spaces in Berlin. In no means to compare the war front to the club space, trauma and an inhibitive release permeates both situations. But to place the trauma perhaps on a spectrum, we can comprehend why it was so important for the male fetish youth groups of the 1990s to rely, unconsciously or consciously, on past frameworks. The trauma in which youth Berliners faced in the wake of the collapse of the Berlin wall were not just related to reconciliation and recognition of their past as once youth in a divided Berlin. The fear of memory, the question of what is to be remembered, and the restaging of history were of course the kernels of anxiety. But even more so, Berlin was still divided, socially, politically, culturally, and aesthetically -- the "wall of the mind" lived on. Historian Scott Campbell writes:

There is a troubling "schizophrenia" of boomtown and recession, a lack of clear planning vision to coordinate and regulate the 1990s building boom, greater tolerance of rich-poor disparities, intolerance of immigrants, a rising interest in right-wing politics, and enduring resentment and inequality between east and west.³⁷

This was part of the destructive discourse male youth were engaged with. They were engaged with perverting, perhaps even destructing, the past that had ushered this divide to begin with. At the same time, they were forming a separate tract from the new federal state's attempt at integration. Ultimately, the '94 flyer, if not only a perfect presentation of how codified the pictorial language of flyers really was, then a legible ephemera of evidence that supports the 1990s male youth's interest and passive dissolution of Germany's past.

In the 1996 Snax flyer (Fig. 2), a more vertical presentation, a gas mask connects one man's mouth to the other's anus; the man on the right is being gagged with a metal choker while the other's neck is bonded with the archetypal o-ring. Both men are attempting to release themselves from what seems like an evil experiment. Taking a horizontal format, the 1997 Snax flyer (Fig. 3) uses traditional war photography to imbue a similar sexual fantasy into militarist

³⁷ Scott Campbell, "Capital Reconstruction and Capital Accumulation in Berlin: A Reply to Peter Marcuse," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 23 (1999): 173-79.

camaraderie. In both of these flyers, the gas mask plays an important role in the fetish fantasy as well as inducing a sense of visual memory. Likewise, the '96 flyer's industrial and mechanical assemblage as well as the use of photomontage in the '97 flyer appropriates both Otto Dix's post-war surrealist compositions and John Heartfield's anti-Nazi collage works (Fig. 4 and 5 respectively). The pictorial language of these two flyers, becomes a method of actively inventing an heirloom of object and symbolic memory, or perhaps a visual heritage.

For the original use: Gas masks protect the wearer from gas attacks and air raids, most notably used as a result of chemical warfare and air raids that emerged in both World Wars.³⁸ In many countries following the first Great War, every citizen, including children, received a General Civilian Respirator.³⁹ In popular literature and representations of the gas mask in its mnemonic afterlife, the gas mask was closely related to the visceral memory of war. Gas masks, in their afterlife in wartime narrative, relive the visceral sensations of memory: "Recently, I used a dust filter mask while rubbing down paint and its rubber smell evoked a long forgotten memory -- that of my wartime gas mask."⁴⁰ Furthermore, anthropologist Gabriel Moshenska has equated the use, the aesthetics, and the history of the gas mask to the uniform, and in those regards, has understood the mask as having the ability to disguise, transform, and display identity. He writes that gas masks are a prime example of inanimate things becoming animate agents.⁴¹ Used in the fetish schema, gas masks may entail a few things: anonymity, enclosure and punishment, and lastly dehumanization. Dually, the association of gas masks to war, displeasure, and protection heightens the power dynamics and visual evocations of the sexual fantasy. The presentation of the gas mask used as a fetish object for sexual roleplay in the 1996 Snax flyer connects the two male bodies. Not only used here for identity privacy, the gas mask clearly connotes a sense of dehumanization, as one of the males sucks the 'chemicals' out from the other, perhaps energizing the technological malware attached to his left hip. In the wake of the technological boom of the 1990s, the '96 Snax flyer combines the memorial and mnemonic sensory attributes of the gas mask with a clear sexualization of technology, both archaic and new. The "experiment" here is one of repression and punishment, but

³⁸ Moshenska, Gabriel. "Gas Masks: Material Culture, Memory, and the Senses." *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 16, no. 3, 2010, pp. 609–628.

³⁹ Moshenska, 610.

⁴⁰ David Newman. "A wartime kid's personal story" (BBC, 2003). 1.

⁴¹ Moshenska, 612.

in a space of "safe play" these degradations become an emancipation of personal identity through the reworking of a historical object.

The 1997 flyer distorts wartime photography, typography, and postcards. In addition, the flyer's visual representation is immediately reminiscent of both Grosz's portrayals of the war and Heartfield's methods of photomontages. Here, the visual vernacular of wartime realism and the form of post-war surrealism powers the pictorial language of the 90s flyer, furthering the notion of timeless historical turnover. With the stamp of Snax, the image on the right of presumably three men, wrestling in the mud, becomes overtly sexual. In addition to reflecting wartime aesthetics, the men all wear Mackintoshes, or all leather raincoats. In fetish and BDSM culture, as Steel notes, the rubber suit becomes a "second skin." A form of *constriction fetish*, that of which constricts the body, many fetishists find sensorial pleasure and erogenous safety in the ability to pose a secondary identity, a second skin.⁴²

Both the 1996 and the 1997 flyer work in similar ways to the earlier 1994 flyer. They distort a historical precedent and in turn use that perversion to form a remasculinated identity. The '94 flyer works with not only physical representation but the theoretical and textual realm of the Weimar debate on homosexuality: the two grapplers are muscular, faceless, and hypermasculine to the point of being more motifs than individuals. It is the juxtaposition of their context, though, that enriches the flyer's relationship with previous German periods. While they could easily be doing battle, they are instead seen as lovers, "playing safe" instead of engaging each other as true combatants. The pictorial language of the '96 and '97 flyer takes a more direct stance and invert visual objects, images, and forms of war and the military. They reappropriate gas masks, trench imagery, and even make efforts, in the case of the poster from 1997, to authentically recreate the media forms of the period, again invoking previous warfare and the shock value that comes with revisiting a culturally sore subject. In doing so, though, they have reconciled these traumas; war, division, torture; in a way that does not blot them out completely, but rather filtered them through a new sociocultural lens of analysis and experimentation in a process of metanoia that existed not just on the level of the individual, but in the collective consciousness of an entire subculture.

⁴² Steele, 153.

Conclusion

The leather fetish scene has become an essential piece to the socio-topographical blueprint of Berlin and its mainstream media. As it emerged in the 90s subcultural jungle of post-industrialism, techno music, and the club scene, the fetish scene along with its objects, spaces, and culture, proved to be integral to the infrastructure of memory and the entwining of history in Berlin. A groundwork movement initiated by youth, the fetish scene was primarily situated in the neighborhoods surrounding the collapse of the wall, engaging as social integration for both East and West Berliners. Fetish culture materialized a male identity that was not entirely new but predicated on the history of German gender and sexual politics as well as the metaphysical trauma developed in the years of division. In a time of “willful forgetting,” the homosexual male fetish scene did not forget: they wore their gas masks, partied in Nazi bunkers, and destructed the ideals of what the German male should entail. Ultimately, the fetish scene engaged with *metanoia*, “an attempt of the psyche to heal itself of unbearable conflict by melting down and then being reborn in a more adaptive form” -- a process that required *looking back* not just forward.

Appendix

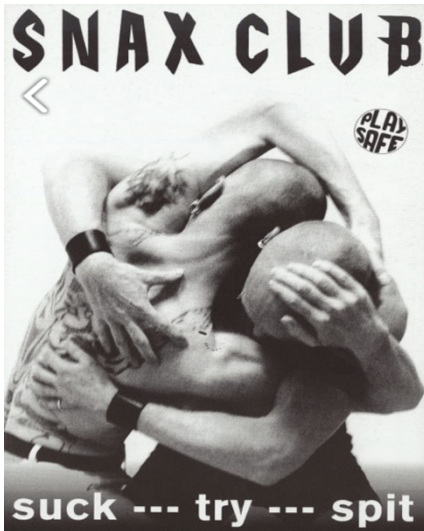


Figure 1. 1994 Snax Event Flyer, courtesy of Berghain/Ostgut, exhibited in Berlin Gallery Xavierlaboulbenne.



Figure 2: 1996 Snax Event Flyer, courtesy of Mike Riemel's Flyer Soziotope.



Figure 3. 1997 Snax Event Flyer courtesy of Mike Riemel's *Flyer Soziotope*.

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The Intersection of Race, Class, Gender, and Sexuality During the Harlem Renaissance

Antoney Bell

Introduction

When more than six million African Americans from the South traveled to Northern industrial cities in search of gainful employment, they were unaware of how this mass scale migration would revolutionize Black lives in the small neighborhood of Harlem. This migration would serve as a catalyst for a movement that redefined the cultural and intellectual identity of African Americans, marking the liberation of Black people from the oppression of Western culture. During the 1920s and 1930s, Harlem emerged as a so-called “Black Mecca” for Black authors, artists, and intellectuals from across the United States, voicing the experiences of Black people during the interwar period.

What would be characterized as the “New Negro” movement was not only a Black cultural revolution, but also a highly political movement that aimed to counter prevailing racial stereotypes and reshape images of Black people through art, literature, and political discourse. The “New Negro” movement represented a renewed sense of dignity and self-assertiveness that had the potential to alter the myths of “Sambo”¹ and “Jezebel”²— figures that had prevailed since slavery. Furthermore, these caricatures were used to degrade Black people in minstrelsy. More importantly, however, the New Negro movement sought to voice opposition to the legacy of racial terrorism in the South, especially after politicians in the North and South had abandoned Reconstruction in the decades that followed the American Civil War. The emergence of various civil rights organizations at the turn of the century led to the politicization of the New Negro movement in Harlem. Under the leadership of William Edward Burghardt Du Bois and James Weldon Johnson, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, or the NAACP, became the voice of the civil rights crusade in the monthly periodical, *The Crisis*. Meanwhile, Marcus Garvey voiced his Pan-African Black Nationalism, thereby reinforcing

¹ Joseph Boskin, *Sambo: The Rise & Demise of an American Jester* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 13–14.

² Melissa V. Harris-Perry, *Sister Citizen: Shame, Stereotypes, and Black Women in America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), 170.

the bonds of solidarity between Africa and its diasporic communities. Black leaders and civil rights organizations that were based in Harlem, created a political platform for young luminaries to voice the depth and complexity of racial discrimination in the United States.

Many scholars of the Harlem Renaissance, however, question the authenticity of the movement—as they are uncertain whether the New Negro movement conveyed a genuine or artificial understanding of the racial complexities during this period of unprecedented change in Black Harlem. According to historian Nathan Irvin Huggins, Black artists and authors of the movement failed to produce “authentic” Black art and literature because they were unable to free themselves from the influence of white patronage. This was especially significant because the Western canon had always represented the status quo, and Black artists were unable to emancipate themselves from the restraints of white cultural norms.³ In other words, literary acceptance had always been closely tied to the power dynamics which perpetuated racial discrimination and a sense of white superiority. As a result of these power dynamics in Western literary traditions, Black creatives were never given any sense of artistic or racial autonomy because their works were judged by patrons who reflected the standards of the Western canon. In *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, David Levering Lewis offered a different account of the movement: one that viewed a small group of senior Black intellectuals as the driving force behind the mainstream recognition of the movement with the help of wealthy benefactors and New York publishers.⁴

Whereas Huggins suggested Black luminaires failed to produce authentic literature and art that expressed the realities of Black experiences, it can also be contended that both white patrons and Black intellectual elites diminished the autonomy and creative freedoms of the New Negro movement’s young luminaries. These limiting forces thereby decoupled the movement from its core purpose: the empowerment of young Black intellectuals and artists. Despite being pressured by senior Black intellectuals and white patrons, certain luminaries—including Nella Larsen, Langston Hughes, and Aaron Douglas—rendered an accurate portrayal of the movement by scrutinizing the censorship imposed upon artists and creating Afro-centered works that reflected the emergence of a new Black pride and consciousness. While young luminaries critiqued systems of white

³ Nathan I. Huggins, *Harlem Renaissance* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 118.

⁴ David Levering Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue* (New York: Penguin Books, 1997), 37.

patronage and the conventions of the Western Canon, that claimed that Black literature and art remained in a state of unrefined primitivity, they also went against the whims of white audiences. This often took the form of providing critiques on larger social issues such as Jim Crow and the legacies of slavery in America. Moreover, young creatives also scrutinized Black intellectual elites for their adherence to colorism, white respectability, and structured gendered roles that further reinforced white dominance.

This essay argues that the movement's wealthy white patrons and benefactors reinforced racial hierarchies by creating fictitious conceptions of Black primitivity, exoticizing Black culture and fetishizing Black sexuality. Conversely, Black intellectual elites pressured young luminaries to adhere to colorism and Victorian social mores, which further reinforced structured gendered roles, sexual morality, proximity to whiteness, and white social respectability within the movement.

Foundations of the New Negro Movement and the Politics of Post-Reconstruction

To understand how Black intellectual elites pressured young creatives, one must first examine the foundations of the New Negro movement. At the turn of the twentieth century, Black activists became increasingly vocal in criticizing Southern and Northern politicians for abandoning Reconstruction. The New Negro movement became a platform through which Black intellectuals could protest racial segregation and analyze the complexities of race relations. As a highly educated Black activist who grew up in the integrated communities of the North, W.E.B. Du Bois stressed education as key for emancipating the “Black race.” This sentiment was shared by many Black intellectuals, who viewed education as a means to reconcile the divide between Black and white America. The emergence of the Black intelligentsia was inspired particularly by the “Talented Tenth,” a theory espoused by Du Bois emphasizing higher education for African Americans. This educated elite would purportedly emancipate the race.⁵ In other words, a classical education could foster social and structural change for African Americans. As a result of the “Talented Tenth,” a formal campaign was undertaken by Black intellectual elites, namely Du Bois and NAACP civil rights leader James Weldon Johnson. Also among these respected intellectuals was Alain Locke—a highly educated

⁵ W.E.B Du Bois, “The Talented Tenth,” in *The Negro Problem*, ed. Booker T. Washington (New York: Humanity Books, 2003), 34.

Rhodes scholar who connected young aspiring authors to wealthy patrons. This crucial role that Black intellectuals played as bridges to patrons and publishers was only made more important since publishing in Southern states was virtually impossible for Black writers. In New York, however, vast networks of publishing companies and newspapers bolstered mainstream recognition for the Black intellectual movement's luminaries.

The term “New Negro” became a popular expression, uniting Black men and women of the middle classes. The phrase spoke to an assertive group of young Black creatives who became more militant and outspoken in their writing in order to depict the true realities of Jim Crow America. These writers were authors like Claude McKay, who wrote the controversial 1928 novel *Home to Harlem*. *Home to Harlem* depicted the realities of Jim Crow America despite criticisms from more senior and conservative intellectuals like Du Bois. Like other senior intellectuals of the Black bourgeoisie, Du Bois fought hard to counter prevailing racial archetypes that associated Black people with a baser, animalistic persona. However, in doing so, Du Bois also embodied a sort of “hypocritical white respectability” that stood in sharp contrast to the hardships that were endured by McKay and the majority of Black Harlemites who worked menial jobs.⁶ Du Bois accused McKay of creating an unflattering portrayal of Harlem filled with promiscuity, misbehavior, and impropriety. *Home to Harlem* allegedly confirmed white America's problematic and incredibly prejudiced opinion of Black people as sexual animals who were incapable of assimilation in American society. Although literary works like *Home to Harlem* received criticism for their racy depictions of Black Harlem, McKay stepped outside the conventional boundaries of Black literature by depicting Harlem's working class. McKay's famous poem *If We Must Die* also reflected the true spirit of the Harlem Renaissance, characterized by its militant nature and protest against the incessant lynchings and racial violence in Jim Crow America.⁷ More importantly, it demonstrated how young Black intellectuals depicted the hardships of working class Black peoples and the injustice of racial discrimination without pandering to the whims of white Americans or Black intellectual elites. This literary tradition demonstrated the emergence of a new Black consciousness, which stood in opposition to traditional attitudes surrounding race

⁶ Claude McKay. *A Long Way from Home*, ed. Gene Andrew Jarrett (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 2007), 32, 176.

⁷ McKay. *A Long Way from Home*, 25.

politics and Black consciousness. Young Black intellectuals redefined Black thought and culture through art and literature.

Although young authors received support from Black educated elites, the conservative intelligentsia was very critical of works that transcended the boundaries of genteel white culture. In the 1920s and 1930s, civil rights leaders and intellectuals from the NAACP wanted Black literature to imitate the refined propriety of the white upper-class in order to gain acceptance and respect from white readers. Several leaders of the movement—including James Weldon Johnson and Walter White—used the theme of racial passing and the “tragic mulatto” as key components in the literature of the Harlem Renaissance.⁸ It was not surprising that much of the literature from the New Negro movement centered around light-skinned Black intellectuals who adopted the sophisticated mannerisms of the white elite. For the Black bourgeoisie, literature and art became propaganda. These works became instruments of racial empowerment used to bolster the social agenda of the Black elite during the aftermath of Reconstruction.

The growth of the literary movement during the Harlem renaissance reflected class conflict between middle-class and working-class African Americans. Having been raised and educated in Northern cities, many middle-class Black Americans came from communities that were racially tolerant. Unlike civil rights leader Booker T. Washington, who was born into slavery on a Virginian plantation, race leaders and intellectual elites from the North were unaware of the hardships endured by Black Southerners. They often denounced Washington’s strategy of racial accommodation during the 1895 Atlanta Compromise, which emphasized an industrial education and the accumulation of material wealth to create economic stability and self-sufficiency for the Black community.⁹ Nevertheless, when Southern Black people flooded into Northern cities during the Great Migration, ghettos emerged in urban areas and Black elites shunned the working class. Older generations of Black intellectuals were ashamed of the working class because they hindered the intellectuals’ pretentious view of the Black experience. According to Harlem native and Democratic congressman Charles Rangel, uneducated African Americans never participated in

⁸ Cary D. Wintz and Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia of the Harlem Renaissance* (London: Routledge, 2004), 960, 1080.

⁹ Booker T. Washington, “Industrial Education for the Negro,” in *The Negro Problem*, ed. Booker T. Washington, (Amherst: Humanity Books, 2003), 18.

the Black intellectual movement except through the service industry.¹⁰ Instead, they waited tables and washed dishes in clubs and restaurants. In other words, working-class Black people were essentially excluded from the Renaissance.¹¹ Whereas Harlem was home to the largest Black community in the United States, the New Negro movement only voiced the opinions of Black intellectuals from the middle classes, which was reflected within its literature. Ultimately, the movement embodied the socioeconomic divide among African Americans, failing to depict the realities of the entire Black community.

Although older generations adhered to notions of white elitism, Harlem’s younger generations rebelled against the censorship imposed by the Black bourgeoisie. Artists such as Langston Hughes sought to depict the movement in its entirety by voicing the experiences of the working masses. In the “Negro Artist and the Racial Mountain” and “These Bad New Negroes: A Critique on Critiques,” Langston Hughes criticized white racial prejudices while simultaneously condemning the Black bourgeoisie.¹² Ultimately, younger generations understood that a wealth of untapped artistic material and inspiration resided within the African American working class. After all, rural Black Southerners brought spirituals, Jazz, and the Blues to Harlem during the Great Migration. The working masses were the heart of Black culture.

Fictitious Conceptions of Black Primitivity

Behind the scenes of Harlem’s literary movement was a wealthy white elite, which bankrolled and controlled young Black artists. Harlem was home to talented authors who received patronage from white socialites, intellectuals, and philanthropists. White money and connections created mainstream recognition for Harlem’s aspiring luminaries. Despite their good intentions, white intellectuals and philanthropists bestowed mixed blessings on the Harlem Renaissance. Patrons used Black literature to reinforce their own preconceived notions of Black Americans, while others commodified the movement for capital and commercial gain.

Charlotte Osgood Mason was among the white patrons who used Black luminaries to entrench her own racial prejudices. Mason was

¹⁰ Charles Rangel, “Charles Rangel,” interview by Henry Blaukopf, *A People’s History of Harlem*, NYPL, audio, 57:52, Apr 27, 2009, audio, 57:52, <http://oralhistory.nypl.org/interviews/charlie-rangel-3g6bk2#4:07>.

¹¹ Rangel, interview.

¹² Wintz and Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 704.

a widow who had accumulated vast amounts of wealth after inheriting her late husband's estate.¹³ During the late 1920s and early 1930s, Mason became a literary patron who was instrumental in the successes of several talented artists and authors, including Zora Neale Hurston and Langston Hughes. However, many artists under Mason's patronage criticized her controlling and overbearing behavior. In *The Ways of White Folk*, Hughes mocked Mason's authoritative demeanor through his fictional character Dora Ellsworth.¹⁴ Like many other white patrons and literary critics, Mason wanted Hughes and Hurston to focus on the “primitive” aspects of their literature in exchange for material and financial support.¹⁵ In a letter to Hughes on June 19th, Mason wrote in fascination of Indigenous American folklore, noting how:

The primitive element still flaming in a people who have known nothing from civilization but misunderstanding our own annihilation. While they went through the process of made over into white Indians - into white negros.¹⁶

Here it is made clear that Mason's relationship with Black creatives revolved around her obsession and commitment to evoking primitivism in their writing. Primitivism reinforced the belief that Indigenous cultures were simplistic and unsophisticated in nature, and therefore inferior to the educated and progressive societies of the West.

Primitivism was often depicted in modernist artwork to justify European colonialism and “civilizing” efforts. Whereas some literary critics argued that twentieth-century primitivism was emancipatory because it implied that the “primitive” was superior to the “civilized,” its subtext reinforced derogatory racial hierarchies that were common in Western societies. Mason clearly adhered to these notions of racial superiority and white dominance by choosing to suppress the message of protest behind the literary movement. She disliked Black writers and artists who used artistic expression to voice their opposition to Jim Crow and America's legacy of systemic anti-Black racism.¹⁷ Mason

¹³ Wintz and Paul Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 769.

¹⁴ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 771.

¹⁵ Arnold Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes: 1902–1941, I, too, Sing America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986), 147.

¹⁶ Charlotte Osgood Mason to Langston Hughes, June 19, 1927, JWJ-MSS-26, Box 111, Folder 2079, Langston Hughes Papers, James Weldon Johnson Special Collection, Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

¹⁷ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 128.

instead wanted the Black intellectual movement to embrace its "primitive" African roots, suggesting Black luminaries were "urban savages" forced to adapt to Western civilization.¹⁸ It was poems such as *Lament for Dark Peoples* that drew Mason to Langston Hughes:

I was a red man one time,
But the white man came.
I was a black man, too,
But the white man came.

They drove me out of the forest.
They took me away from the jungles.
I lost my trees.
I lost my silver moons.

Now they've caged me
In the circus of civilization.¹⁹

Hughes gracefully evoked Black atavism in his poems. His words depicted the purported primal fears and instincts of West Africans, who lost most of their connection to their indigeneity during the transatlantic slave trade.²⁰ Authors and artists of the Harlem Renaissance often depicted elements of transatlantic slavery and the African diaspora, showing the development of the Black experience within contemporary Western culture. These works embodied the hardships of Black peoples who were oppressed by colonial settlers. Paintings from the esteemed artist Aaron Douglas, including *Into Bondage*²¹ and *The Founding of Chicago*,²² demonstrated the uncelebrated role of Black people who built Western societies after being taken from their ancestral homelands. African-centered works from Douglas and Hughes became critiques of larger social issues surrounding race like slavery, colonialism, and racial segregation.

¹⁸ Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, 129; Mason associated Blackness with the sentimental view of the "noble savage," which was commonly attributed to Indigenous peoples of the Americas.

¹⁹ Langston Hughes, *The Weary Blues* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2015), 82.

²⁰ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 48.

²¹ Aaron Douglas, *Into Bondage*, 1936, oil on canvas, 165.1 x 164.47 x 8.26 cm (65 ¾ x 3 ¼ in.), Fine Arts Museums of San Francisco, San Francisco, United States.

²² Aaron Douglas, *The Founding of Chicago*, 1933, Gouache on Paper Board, 37.47 x 31.43 cm (14 ¾ x 12 ¾ in.), The Spencer Museum of Art, Kansas, United States.

Unfortunately, however, white audiences misinterpreted these works as evidence of primitivism. At the turn of the twentieth century, African sculptures appeared in American and European collections as a result of colonial looting and they were often lumped together according to similarity.²³ For twentieth-century artists, the new tradition of incorporating African art within the modernist artworks reflected a means of revitalizing the Western canon. Various twentieth century European artists, including Pablo Picasso and Georges Braques, turned to African tribal art as a source of artistic inspiration. Picasso, who was arguably the most influential artist of the twentieth century, depicted the "primitive" in his paintings. He argued that the Congolese masks portrayed in his famous oil painting, *Les Femmes d'Alger (O.J.)*, "liberat[ed] an utterly original artistic style of compelling, and even savage force."²⁴ It was common for European artists to borrow aspects of Indigenous art, often disregarding the social and aesthetic origins of African sculptures. European artists only engaged with these sculptures on a superficial level. Black artists also borrowed certain elements from African tribal art; however, their use of the African sculpture was a means of explaining their history and ancestry as part of the African diasporic community. In other words, the Harlem Renaissance was a period when Black nationalism and the emergence of an Afro-centered identity epitomized the political, social, and cultural life of African Americans.

Unlike European artists, African Americans luminaries also included messages of struggle and emancipation within their artwork which spoke to their own unique experiences as an oppressed and marginalized community in the United States. Aaron Douglas's paintings became a means of critiquing systems of white dominance and empowering Black communities by depicting African-centered histories. *Into Bondage* represented the history of the middle passage and the deracination of entire African communities, which ultimately rendered Black bodies into chattel. *The Founding of Chicago* can be understood as a stunning critique of the capitalist project in America. It examined how generations of Black families sacrificed their liberty in order to build America. Similar critiques of capitalist projects were also

²³ Susan Hiller, *The Myth of Primitivism: Perspectives on Art* (London: Routledge, 1991), 175.

²⁴ Gina M Rossetti. *Imagining the Primitive in Naturalist and Modernist Literature* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2006), 146.

seen in *Building More Stately Mansions*.²⁵ Douglas depicted laboring Africans Americans—whose ancestors had previously built great architectural wonders such as the pyramids—while their posterity was coerced into building the urban industrial cities of the West. However, white audiences viewed these artworks as depictions of tribal savages trapped within encroaching European civilization. They saw Douglas’s paintings and Hughes’s poems as the plight of a broken and backward people struggling to integrate within an increasingly modernized and “civilized” society. They believed this art represented a noble attempt to reconnect with a state of primitivity that was close with nature. White audiences only valued Black art and literature because these works differed from the stagnant traditions of the Western canon during a period of increasing modernization. European primitivist works never criticized oppressive colonial regimes nor denounced Jim Crow and racial terror in the South. Instead, European artists used primitivism to fulfill the artistic void in Western “high culture” by exoticizing Black culture. Black artists used African artistic traditions as a means of reclaiming their lost heritage and asserting a new identity in a society that had robbed them of their culture.

Letters of correspondence between Mason, Hughes, and Hurston further demonstrate how white patrons held a considerable amount of power over Black authors. In 1927, Mason moved the young writers to Westfield, New Jersey, where she kept a close eye on their work and whereabouts.²⁶ She would often read drafts and criticize their work. However, when Hughes expressed his unwillingness to reproduce the “primitive” in his literature, Mason accused him of being disloyal and ungrateful.²⁷ Louise Thompson Patterson, who was hired as a secretary to the young writers, voiced her disapproval of Mason’s controlling behavior. She recalled how Mason screamed at Hughes after he failed to produce primitive literature, despite receiving a monthly stipend of \$225 dollars.²⁸ However, when Hughes started to write political poetry, his relationship with Mason was irreparably damaged. Essays such as “Park Bench” and “Advertisements for the Waldorf-Astoria,” which explored race and class issues in American society, marked the turning point in his connection to the wealthy patron.²⁹ Her

²⁵ Aaron Douglas, *Building More Stately Mansions*, 1944, oil on canvas, 50.8 x 40.6 cm (20 x 16 in.), RISD Museum, Rhode Islands, United States.

²⁶ Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, 182.

²⁷ Rampersad, 185.

²⁸ Rampersad, 185.

²⁹ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 128.

disapproval of Black political activism suggested she had an inherent desire to manipulate and infantilize the young luminaries in order to produce primitivist artworks. Thus, Mason shunned authors who used their artistic platform to denounce racial oppression.

Mason also had contractual power over Zora Neale Hurston's work. Through a legal agreement, she maintained complete ownership of Hurston's Black folklore project.³⁰ Some historians, such as Arnold Rampersad and Yuval Taylor, even argue that Mason was instrumental in creating a rift between Hurston and Hughes by denying Hughes's collaboration in the theatrical play "Mule Bone."³¹ Under Mason's orders, Alain Locke—acting as an overseer of sorts, a role that harkened back to slavery and helped divide enslaved peoples—kept a watchful eye on the young writers and regularly reported their progress. In turn, Mason funded several of Locke's travels and literary works. White patronage often resembled systems of bondage for many Black luminaries. Most wealthy philanthropists adopted the white savior mentality, providing financial support for Black artists in order to indulge in self-gratification. Mason in particular asserted her power over Black luminaries; she wanted to be referred to as "Godmother," and often addressed Locke as her "Little Brown Boy."

Despite Mason's patronizing attitude, Locke endured ridicule because he wanted to prove "how like well bred intelligent whites," intelligent Black luminaries could mimic their white counterparts.³² The power dynamics that existed between Mason, Locke, and Black creatives resembled the dynamics of the slave plantation. Mason embodied the white matriarch who asserted her control over Black creatives, whereas Locke embodied the subservient overseer who struggled to assert his proximity to whiteness in order to gain acceptance and a semblance of control within the white power structure. Mason's brief interest in the movement ended in 1930, when she expressed her discontent with her *protégés* in a letter to Locke. She decided to shift her interests to another equally "primitive" race—the Native Indian.³³ In the end, Hurston voiced feelings of contempt for white patrons, which were shared by many artists including Hughes and McKay. She expressed disapproval for "cheap white folks [who

³⁰ Bell Hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender, and Cultural Politics* (Boston: South End Press, 2015), 138.

³¹ Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, 195 Yuval Taylor, *Zora and Langston: A Story of Friendship and Betrayal* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2019), 233.

³² Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 154.

³³ Rampersad, *The Life of Langston Hughes*, 195.

were] grabbing [their works] and ruining [them].”³⁴ The complex relationship between Mason and her beneficiaries was indicative of an underlying race-based hierarchy in Western society. Art and literature were often ways of upholding racial hierarchies and colonial efforts to “civilize” other races. Charlotte Osgood Mason further demonstrated how wealthy white elites often controlled the narrative behind the art. She became a puppeteer, censoring artists and disrupting the message of Black empowerment behind their artwork.

Whereas Mason provided financial support to Black creatives, American writer and literary patron Carl Van Vechten offered connections to publishers and mainstream audiences. Van Vechten was a close friend to many Black luminaries, bolstering recognition for the movement throughout Harlem. In the early 1920s, he began promoting the works of Black authors in *Vanity Fair*.³⁵ Van Vechten frequented Harlem’s upscale cabarets, drag balls, and rent parties, where he became acquainted with almost every prominent member of New York’s wealthy elite. He was known to throw lavish parties attended by affluent celebrities, such as Fannie Hurst, Helena Rubenstein, and Salvador Dalí.³⁶ It was at these parties that Black luminaries mingled with prominent members of the white elite, making connections with wealthy publishers, patrons, and white socialites. Van Vechten, who had been a close friend to many literary creatives of the Harlem Renaissance, also used his connections to the esteemed publisher Alfred A. Knopf in order to promote the literary works of young authors including Nella Larsen, Zora Neale Hurston, and Langston Hughes. Hughes was one of the first authors who formed a close relationship with Van Vechten. However, Van Vechten’s relationships with Black creatives often turned into mentorships, with young luminaries engaging in a considerable amount of “knee-bending” in order to please “the powerful man who had the resources at his disposal to promote their careers.”³⁷ He would often read drafts of Hughes’s poems and novels, wherein he would recommend works to Knopf for publishing. Van Vechten’s intimate relationships with Black creatives and wealthy

³⁴ Zora Neale Hurston to Langston Hughes, September 20, 1928, JWW-MSS-26, Box 82, Folder 1587-89, Langston Hughes Papers, James Weldon Johnson Special Collection, Beinecke Rare Book Library, Yale University, New Haven, Connecticut, United States.

³⁵ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 1206.

³⁶ Wintz and Finkelman, 1203.

³⁷ Emily Bernard, *Carl Van Vechten and the Harlem Renaissance: A Portrait in Black and White* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 60.

white publishers allowed him to quickly become the most notable white promoter of Black Harlem.

Although Van Vechten contributed significantly in bolstering recognition for the movement, his own writings depicted Black Harlemites as licentious and hypersexual. He had exploited his connection to Black Harlem, using it to promote a false picture of Harlem to white readers. This was evident in his controversial 1926 novel *Nigger Heaven*. The novel portrayed Harlem as a playground where members of the wealthy white elite could partake in licentiousness, with its vivid depictions of gambling, drinking, and promiscuity. Buoyed by its controversial name and portrayal of Black licentiousness, the novel sold out immediately, attracting the attention of mainstream white audiences and becoming one of the most successful novels of the Harlem Renaissance. Van Vechten's novel commoditized the movement, reproducing the idea of Harlem as an urban jungle where prominent white elites could covertly participate in the “Black experience” by frequenting Harlem speakeasies. His novel was successful because it depicted an exaggerated account of Black Harlem. It catered to the fantasies of wealthy white slummers who frequented Harlem's nightlife in search of a wild-night life and interracial sexual pursuits. In fact, after *Nigger Heaven* was published, Van Vechten received requests from several wealthy white Manhattanites to escort them through Black Harlem.

Many members of the Black intelligentsia reacted to Van Vechten novel in similar fashion to Claude McKay's *Home to Harlem*. Du Bois argued that *Nigger Heaven* was an “affront to the hospitality of black folk and the intelligence of whites” in *Crisis*.³⁸ He wanted the Harlem Renaissance to depict the more tasteful and refined elements of the African American culture to avoid undermining the struggle for racial equality. However, unlike *Home to Harlem*, Van Vechten wrote to please the white reader. Although many creatives wrote in defence of Van Vechten's novel, arguing that it provided insight into how a dominant white society hindered the artistic freedoms of Black luminaries, Van Vechten's novel spoke to an implicit form of white humanitarianism. He positioned himself as the bridge between Black Harlem and white Manhattan through his literature and extravagant parties. This white integrationist approach to promoting the Harlem Renaissance further demonstrated an imbalance of power within the movement and the

³⁸ W.E.B Du Bois, review of *Nigger Heaven*, December 1926, MS 312, W. E. B. Du Bois Papers, Special Collections and University Archives, University of Massachusetts Amherst Libraries, Amherst, Massachusetts, United States.

politics of race in the early twentieth century. *Nigger Heaven* had always been predicated on white perceptions of Black Harlem. In a footnote on the term “Nigger,” he explained that the word was an “epiphet [that] is freely used by Negroes among themselves, not only as a term of opprobrium, but also actually as a term of endearment, its employment by a white person is always fiercely resented.”³⁹ Van Vechten even used a “Glossary of Negro words and phrases” to explain the slang and jive used by Harlemites.⁴⁰ Clearly, Van Vechten was not writing for Black audiences. His book was a white reader’s guide to Harlem.⁴¹

The literature and art of the Harlem Renaissance was not intended to cement Black culture within the dominant white American society. It was intended to create a new Black identity and consciousness that stood in opposition to implicit and explicit forms of white dominance. To bolster a true cultural renaissance, Black luminaries need to discover their own identities and make their own judgments of African American life without white liberals seeking to patronize them at every turn or assert white cultural hegemony. Otherwise, the Harlem Renaissance would always represent a mere reflection of Black culture in the white gaze.

The Problem of Colorism within the Movement

To understand the genesis of colorism in Black literature, one must examine respectability politics at the turn of the twentieth century. W.E.B. Du Bois and Marcus Garvey understood white audiences were indifferent towards the Black struggle for social change. Du Bois believed novels like *Nigger Heaven* painted a false reality of Harlem to white readers by omitting the realities of working-class Black Americans.⁴² The average Harlemite was a hardworking conservative who conformed to social norms, much like ordinary white people. However, white audiences were undoubtedly more interested in Harlem’s nightlife than the realities of the working classes. In 1933, Du Bois attacked the literary movement and its ties to white commercialism during a speech at Fisk University:

Why was it that the Renaissance of literature which began among Negroes ten years ago has never taken real and lasting root? It was

³⁹ Carl Van Vechten, *Nigger Heaven* (New York: Grosset and Dunlap, 1928), 27.

⁴⁰ Van Vechten, 285–86.

⁴¹ Lewis, *When Harlem Was in Vogue*, 183.

⁴² Annemarie Moeijies, “Character vs. Caricature: The Construction of Blackness in Carl Van Vechten’s *Nigger Heaven* and Claude McKay’s *Home to Harlem*” (Master’s thesis, University of Leiden), 5.

because it was a transplanted and exotic thing. It was a literature written for the benefit of white people and at the behest of white readers, and starting out privately from the white point of view. It never had a real Negro constituency and it did not grow out of the inmost heart and frank experience of Negroes. On such an artificial basis no real literature can grow.⁴³

Du Bois's criticism of the literary movement was well-placed. However, he himself also inadvertently adhered to the existing racial hierarchy that preserved both colorism and classism within the movement. Du Bois focused on holding Black culture to the standards of the Western canon. His emphasis on a classical education for African Americans catered to notions of Victorian propriety and white respectability, which were often associated with lighter-skinned Black people. Alain Locke, the so-called father of the movement, was among the elites who adhered to the standards of the Western canon. Having received their higher education in Europe, both Locke and Du Bois imitated the "high" culture of the Victorian era, suggesting that colorism and elitism were prevalent among Black intellectuals, many of whom were affiliated with the NAACP.

Marcus Garvey was one of the few radical activists who actively critiqued the legacy of colorism that was associated with the politics of the New Negro movement. He was astonished by the multitude of white people and lighter-skinned Black people who worked for the NAACP. He noticed that Black people with lighter complexions generally worked in administrative and executive positions, whereas those with darker complexions were confined to menial tasks.⁴⁴ When Du Bois called him a "fat, little, Black man" during a literary feud in 1923, Garvey responded by exposing the NAACP's issue of colorism and classism in *Negro World*, the official newspaper of the Universal Negro Improvement Association (UNIA). He argued that Du Bois was an unfit leader who held contempt for Black people with darker complexions, while the NAACP encouraged skin bleaching and hair straightening "in their mad desire of approach to the white race."⁴⁵ Racial passing was common among light-skinned Black people who wished to retain the privileges of the white elite. Garvey acknowledged

⁴³ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 316.

⁴⁴ Hannah P. McDonald, "Black Colorism and White Racism: Discourse on the Politics of White Supremacy, Black Equality, and Racial Identity, 1915–1930" (Master's thesis, University of Montana, 2020), 15.

⁴⁵ Marcus Garvey and E. U. Essien-Udom, *Philosophy and Opinions of Marcus Garvey, or, Africa for the Africans*, ed. Amy Jacques Garvey, (London: Frank Cass & Co, 1967), 311.

that African American intellectuals were guilty of perpetuating colorism while actively policing Black people who did not follow the status quo.

As a self-taught Jamaican-born activist, Garvey understood how color and class impacted social structure and race politics. Unlike his American counterparts, Garvey was raised in Jamaica, where colorism was deeply entrenched into the fabric of West Indian society. Color signified privilege and class within the “pigmentocracy”—a hierarchy of complexion that had emerged during the period of transatlantic slavery. As a caste system was gradually instituted by slave owners among enslaved peoples, lighter-skinned enslaved people were placed inside plantation houses because of their fair complexion. As house slaves, many lighter-skinned enslaved peoples benefited from their proximity to white owners. They lived more comfortable lifestyles, enjoyed better working conditions and food, attained minimal amounts of education, and formed closer relationships with their white masters who introduced them to the ways of white peoples.⁴⁶ As a result, lighter-complexioned enslaved peoples benefited from their proximity to whiteness, creating resentment among the enslaved peoples with darker complexions working in the fields. Field hands were considered less civilized and intellectually inferior, and therefore occupied menial and hard labor positions.

Coerced sexual relationships between female slaves and white masters only further extended the number of lighter-skinned enslaved peoples. White masters benefited from coerced sexual relations with female enslaved peoples because slavery followed the legal doctrine of *Patrus Sequitur Ventrem*—a legal principle in which children born from enslaved women inherited their mother’s status. The fertility of Black women was bounded to slavery; through rape, mixed-race offspring emerged as a new class of enslaved peoples that distanced themselves from the social status of field hands.⁴⁷ Since slavery, the legacy of colorism and racial caste benefited lighter-skinned elites with access to wealth, superior social status, and higher education, whereas those with darker skin fell victim to social stratification due to colorism.⁴⁸ Many mixed-race Black peoples also chose to disassociate themselves from

⁴⁶ Lawrence Graham, *Our Kind of People: Inside America’s Black Upper Class* (New York: HarperCollins, 1999), 6–7.

⁴⁷ Graham, 7.

⁴⁸ For more information on colorism and pigmentocracy in the Americas and Caribbean, see Evelyn Nakano Glenn, *Shades of Difference: Why Skin Color Matters* (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2009), 43–7, 87, 172–3.

their African roots in order to obtain the same privileges as white elites. Garvey recognized this color hierarchy existed among Black intellectual elites of the NAACP given its strong presence in the Caribbean. Senior elites of the Harlem Renaissance adhered to the same hierarchy of complexion and whiteness that was used to divide Black peoples. Color and class were used as tools of oppression to further entrench the social advantages of lighter-skinned intellectuals that had access to higher education. As such, these elites were often given positions of political leadership in the NAACP by virtue of their proximity to whiteness.

These dynamics were not new to Garvey or Du Bois; Black peoples with lighter complexions had always occupied the highest political and economic positions in African American life since the antebellum period. Colorism was even prevalent in historically Black universities and fraternities that barred darker-skinned students through the use of a degrading brown paper bag test.⁴⁹ Various ads in Harlem promoted by the NAACP also advertised a bleaching cream for women who wanted a fairer complexion. However, Du Bois was reluctant to acknowledge his privilege within the color hierarchy, implying there was an element of hypocrisy in his theory of racial uplift through higher education. As a Harvard-educated scholar and lighter-skinned man from the integrated communities of the North, Du Bois discounted the realities of colorism in the Black community similar to how white Southerners discounted the existence of the color line.

Garvey's approach to race relations differed, championing Booker T. Washington's accommodationist strategy and strengthening the bonds of solidarity between Africa and its diaspora communities. Garvey advocated for pan-African nationalism in opposition to integrationism. "Race First" became the underlying principle of his pan-Africanist discourse, which became known as Garveyism. African-descended peoples needed to put their own racial self-interest above class and color in order to confront structures of racial oppression in Jim Crow America and colonial Africa. During the mid-1910s, the UNIA became the leading racial improvement organization of the Harlem Renaissance, emphasizing Black racial exclusivity, self-reliance, and nationhood for all African-descended peoples. Unlike the NAACP, which was founded by Euro-Americans and catered to the whims of lighter-skinned intellectual elites, the Garveyite movement dominated race politics in the early twentieth century because of its ability to unite the Black masses despite color or class.

⁴⁹ Graham, *Our Kind of People*, 4.

The Exoticization of the Movement

The Harlem Renaissance was not solely limited to literature and politics. It was also the focal point of music and entertainment during the Roaring Twenties. Although New York nightclubs were routinely raided by police during Prohibition, Harlem developed a thriving nightlife.⁵⁰ Harlem cabarets and speakeasies were lively establishments where New Yorkers drank bootleg liquor and danced to the music of the Jazz age. Harlem became a popular destination for white elites, many of whom wished to escape New York's bureaucratic lifestyle. During Prohibition, the demand for alcohol significantly increased, allowing criminals to profit from the production and distribution of illegal liquor.⁵¹ Many gangsters owned Harlem nightclubs and profited directly from the sale of bootleg liquor, sharing some of the profits with authorities who turned a blind eye. Ironically, these criminal establishments were relatively safe spaces where Black people could interact and mingle with wealthy white slummers. Novels like *Home to Harlem* and *Nigger Heaven* succeeded in attracting white elites to Harlem. The portrayal of Harlem as a space for prostitution, drugs, and gambling created a diversion for the wealthy elite.

In 1920s Harlem, Jazz and the Renaissance were synonymous. New Orleans was the birthplace of Jazz, but Harlem became the new epicenter for this new genre of music during the early twenties. Jazz and the Blues became an expression of Black culture; it embodied the hardships and joys of the working-class African Americans from the Deep South. Although in certain upscale cabarets, Black Harlemites were only allowed to enter as entertainers or employees. Alvin Reed, owner of the Lenox Lounge, recalled how Black people were banned from segregated nightclubs unless they were celebrities.⁵² Ironically, the people who were responsible for the conception of Jazz were forbidden from viewing the performances of its most talented musicians because segregated clubs catered exclusively to a white upper-class clientele. Congressman Charles Rangel described this phenomenon as a common reoccurrence. Nightclubs and dance halls—such as the Apollo Theatre, the Savoy Ballroom, and the Cotton Club—enforced segregation, so wealthy white New Yorkers could “hear the best of music and to see the

⁵⁰ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 911.

⁵¹ Wintz and Finkelman, 909.

⁵² Alvin Reed. “Alvin Reed,” interview by Henry Blaukopf, *A People's History of Harlem*, NYPL, July 1, 2014, audio, 01:29:16, <http://oralhistory.nypl.org/interviews/alvin-reed-lgq2yg#1:16:41>.

best of dances."⁵³ Both Rangel and Reed spoke to an explicit form of systemic racism through which white owners and audiences exploited Black musicians and profited from the emergence of a Black-dominated industry.

There was an element of careerism that motivated Black musicians to perform for whites-only establishments. However, their desire to thrive in the music industry also hindered social growth. The famous Duke Ellington, conductor of the Washingtonian orchestra, was one of many artists to perform in the degrading atmosphere of segregated night clubs. As the headliner for the Cotton Club, Ellington popularized a style of Jazz called "Jungle," which was often played in the Cotton Club. White audiences were mesmerized by tunes like "Jungle Night in Harlem" and "Echoes of the Jungle," which fed into their misconceptions of Black primitivity.⁵⁴ The club's interior also mimicked the Southern plantation mansions of the antebellum period with large white columns and long veranda.⁵⁵ The backdrop was decorated with jungle motifs, depicting naked Black people prancing around palm trees and vines.⁵⁶ The division of labor reinforced the degrading atmosphere as well. White workers wrote, produced, and choreographed shows, while Black workers performed menial tasks such as cooking, cleaning, and entertaining guests. Black waiters were even forced to wear red tuxedos, mimicking house slaves on Southern plantations.⁵⁷ Despite the establishment's demeaning aesthetic, the Cotton Club hosted some of the best Black performers in Harlem because of its connection to wealth and status. Young Black musicians were able to perform in front of New York's biggest celebrities and philanthropists, affording them the opportunity to climb the socio-economic ladder, and sometimes at the expense of their racial integrity. The white elite maintained the monopoly on wealth, thereby controlling the Black musicians who were exploited for entertainment.

The Dual Harm: Fetishization and Victorian Femininity

The nightclub was also a space where Black women became objects of sexual fetishization. In the Cotton Club, Black chorus girls were considered by patrons as part of the club's décor. Patrons expected

⁵³ Rangel, interview.

⁵⁴ A. H. Lawrence, *Duke Ellington and His World: A Biography* (New York: Routledge, 2001), 105.

⁵⁵ Lawrence, 75.

⁵⁶ Lawrence, 75.

⁵⁷ Lawrence, 75.

chorus girls to be tall, light-skinned, younger than twenty-one, and often forced them to dance to degrading “jungle” music in leopard-print costumes.⁵⁸ Advertisements for club revues also depicted partially nude Black women in sexually suggestive poses. They were often given names like “The Blackberries” and “Brown Sugar”.⁵⁹ Black women became objects of an intense sexual fetishization which had been cultivated by legacies of rape and concubinage stereotypes.⁶⁰ Since the antebellum era, Black women were depicted as hypersexual “jezebels” with insatiable appetites for sex. Southern slave owners often used Black women as extramarital partners or concubines. Free-born Black women also became willing concubines of wealthy white Southerners in exchange for financial support. Black women were at the mercy of slave owners who asserted their authority through sexual violence with impunity. However, Southerners insinuated that these instances of rape and concubinage demonstrated a lack of civility and sexual restraint on behalf of Black females. Segregated clubs were spaces in which these legacies and archetypes were not only preserved, but also commoditized. White men often sought out Black prostitutes in Harlem, reinforcing notions of Black licentiousness, while show girls were depicted as sexual commodities in segregated nightclubs.⁶¹ This was an effective means of policing the sexuality of Black women, while disguising the immorality of white men.

Josephine Baker was one of many Renaissance entertainers who realized her artistic ambitions at the expense of these stereotypes. At fifteen, Baker began her career in Harlem, where she performed in chorus lines of Broadway musicals such as *Shuffle Along*. In 1925, Baker moved to Paris, where she performed in *La Revue Nègre* at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées.⁶² In her rise to fame, she introduced tap-dancing to Parisians in her famous *Danse Sauvage*, captivating French critics. During her performance, Baker danced topless in a costume consisting of feathers, strings, and beads.⁶³ She performed in a similar costume consisting of bananas during her act called *La Danse des Bananes*. Throughout the 1920s, Baker cemented her status as a world-class

⁵⁸ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 913.

⁵⁹ Wintz and Finkelman, 913.

⁶⁰ For more information, see Edward E. Baptist, *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, 2014), 215–61.

⁶¹ Chad Heap, *Slumming: Sexual and Racial Encounters in American Nightlife, 1885-1940* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), 269.

⁶² Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 93.

⁶³ Jennifer Anne Bottin, *Colonial Metropolis: The Urban Grounds of Anti-Imperialism and Feminism in Interwar Paris* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 1.

entertainer at the expense of her integrity as Black woman. She embraced an animalistic persona in Parisian theaters, reinforcing the notion of sexual deviancy that was attributed to Black women. Allegedly, her sexually suggestive dancing reflected the "primitive" aspects of African cultures. By 1930, Baker had renounced her animalistic persona and appropriated the elegance and sophistication of Parisian culture. She attributed her artistic success to the "civilizing" effects of Paris.⁶⁴ French critics comically argued that Baker was "the finest possible example of perfection in the intellectual molding of the Black race by European civilization."⁶⁵ In the process of becoming a world-class performer, Baker preserved the existing "Jezebel" stereotype—a myth commonly used by Europeans to justify "civilizing" efforts. Baker willingly accepted her association with the "primitive" African, thereby solidifying the racial hierarchy imposed by colonialism. Eventually, she willingly renounced her Blackness because her success was tied to the appropriation of French culture.

Baker's willingness to leave America for the European stage was potentially a testament to the dynamics of femininity within the New Negro movement. While male leaders of the movement struggled to reconstruct Black masculinity in a society dominated by white patriarchy, Black women were forced to endure the constraints of both gender and race.⁶⁶ To overcome the prevailing stereotypes created by legacies of rape and concubinage, Black women imitated the strict moral codes of the Victorian era. They were hindered by racial stereotypes depicting them as unfeminine and hypersexual, and by Victorian morality stressing domesticity, motherhood, and submissiveness. Black elites believed Victorian femininity was a means for Black women to reclaim their womanhood and sexual dignity.⁶⁷ They fought hard to disassociate the movement from the shifting gender roles and sexual identities of the early twentieth century. They believed New Womanhood and the emergence of queer and homosexual identities in Harlem nightclubs and drag balls would ultimately harm the social image of Black women.

While the New Negro movement chose to adhere to Victorian femininity, young authors like Nella Larsen challenged the racial

⁶⁴ Bottin, *Colonial Metropolis*, 7.

⁶⁵ Bottin, 7.

⁶⁶ Emily C. Shue, "A Fine Line: Conflicting Interpretations of Homoeroticism and Self-Love in Nella Larsen's *Passing*," *The Oswald Review* 19, no. 5 (2017): 41, <https://scholarcommons.sc.edu/tor/vol19/iss1/5>.

⁶⁷ Wintz and Finkelman, *Encyclopedia*, 128.

stereotypes and structured gender roles created by white audiences and senior intellectuals of Harlem Renaissance. Instead of adhering to the status quo, these young authors criticized the ideals of the New Negro movement. While Black males reconstructed Black masculinity by adhering to white patriarchy, they inadvertently imitated the same systems of gendered oppression that were used to control femininity. Clearly, there was an element of the hypocrisy within the movement. Nella Larsen highlighted this hypocrisy in her novel *Passing*, a literary work that demonstrated the intersection between race, class, gender, and sexuality in the New Negro movement. Larsen juxtaposed the novel's main characters Irene and Clare, both of whom are light-skinned women. Irene embodied the ideal depiction of the respectable New Negro woman who adhered to social constructs of domesticity and motherhood, whereas Clare represented the independent woman who married a wealthy white man and actively pursued her own desires to pass as a white woman.⁶⁸ This juxtaposition served as a criticism of the New Negro movement and the complex moral issues facing Black Americans, implying that both perspectives were flawed in different ways. Irene sought a false sense of security within classism and structured gendered roles, while Clare willingly relinquished her racial identity for wealth and prosperity.⁶⁹ The former represents a critique of New Negro women who willingly accepted gendered oppression to counter the racial stereotypes associated with Black women, and the latter demonstrates how lighter-skinned Black women could abandon their culture in the pursuit of social mobility.

To transcend the sexual boundaries imposed by white patriarchal norms, Larsen also conveyed the notion of homoerotic desire between Irene and Clare. In doing so, Larsen sexualized Black women. However, she used the theme of homosexuality to challenge the restrictions imposed upon Black women in a society in which they were oppressed by both race and gender. Literary scholar Deborah McDowell suggested that Irene gravitated toward Clare due to her repressed sexuality.⁷⁰ According to McDowell, Irene's attraction to Clare and the lack of sexual intimacy in her marriage implied that she struggled to come to terms with her own sexuality.⁷¹ Despite Irene's

⁶⁸ Renee E. Chase, "A Shade Too Unreserved: Destabilizing Sexuality and Gender Constructs of the New Negro Identity in Harlem Renaissance Literature" (PhD diss., University of the Denver, 2012), 100-1.

⁶⁹ Chase, 108.

⁷⁰ Deborah E. McDowell, *"The Changing Same": Black Women's Literature, Criticism, and Theory* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995), 94-7.

⁷¹ McDowell, 94-7.

fascination with Clare’s “arresting eyes” and “seductive” voice, she suppressed her attraction because it did not conform to structured gendered roles.⁷² Larsen’s literary representation of Black women with sexual passions condemned the boundaries imposed on Black female sexuality. Irene’s infatuation with Clare also represented an underlying desire to possess the same sexual freedoms as white women. Black women were constantly policed by these strict moral codes, despite the advancement of feminism in the early twentieth century. Clare’s decision to pass as a white woman absolved her from racial and gender constraints, making Irene envious of her counterpart because she was unable to flout social convention as a wealthy “white” woman. The underlying message of sexual repression symbolized how Black women were trapped within the confines of Victorian social mores in order to reclaim their femininity after centuries of sexualized violence and derogatory archetypes enforced by a white patriarchy.

Conclusion

To say that the artistic and literary traditions of the Harlem Renaissance lacked authenticity would be false. Huggins’s accusation that white patrons diminished the literary and artistic traditions of the Harlem Renaissance was well placed. White patrons, including Charlotte Mason and Carl Van Vechten, manipulated and exploited young luminaries in order to commodify the movement for white audiences and to solidify their own ideas about Black art and literature. Furthermore, these ideas were often associated with primitivity and sexual impropriety. However, manipulation from white patrons did not completely rob young creatives of their artistic or creative freedom. Despite having been pressured by white patrons and senior Black intellectuals alike, many young luminaries offered a genuine depiction of the movement by critiquing its systems of control and creating their own artwork and literature that reflected a new Afro-centered identity. Langston Hughes, Nella Larsen, and Aaron Douglas serve as the best examples of a newfound political and cultural consciousness for Black Harlemites who voiced their opposition to the legacies of slavery, Jim Crow, white patronage, structured gender roles, and color hierarchies among senior intellectuals of Harlem Renaissance.

Understanding the overlapping dynamics of race, class, gender, and sexuality within the movement is also important. Much of the scholarship surrounding Harlem tends to look at the leading male figures of the movement and the white patrons instrumental in

⁷² Nella Larsen, *Passing* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1929), 45, 52.

bolstering recognition for Black luminaries. However, scholars often fail to recognize how race leaders and Black intellectuals inadvertently suppressed the voices of Black women. As stated throughout this essay, senior Black intellectuals overlooked the poor and working classes. While ordinary Black folk played a regrettably small role in the Black intellectual movement, it is necessary to understand their perspectives, since average Harlemites belonged to the working classes and could voice the true complexities and hardships of racial discrimination in Jim Crow America. Furthermore, Harlem was an evolving neighborhood within a cultural and sexual metropolis. It was a space where Black people transcended normative gender identities and stepped outside conventional heterosexuality. In order for modern historians to do justice to the Black intellectual movement in Harlem, they must analyze its frameworks through multiple academic disciplines, including, but not limited to, history, sociology, literature, cultural studies, and gender studies.

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